

Report of
The University-College Partnership
Study Committee

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Executive Summary

The University-College Partnership Study Committee has studied the possibility of establishing alliances between the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor and high quality liberal arts colleges such as Oberlin College and Kalamazoo College. The Committee believes that such relationships would benefit the University in several ways: by using faculty-mentored teaching residencies at such liberal arts colleges to better prepare our graduates for the diverse array of faculty roles characteristic of higher education in America; to provide graduate programs University with access to the outstanding undergraduate students produced by these colleges; and to establish intellectual relationships between the faculties of the two institutions. The participating liberal arts colleges would benefit through access to the research opportunities of UM-Ann Arbor, including research faculty, facilities, and libraries; have an opportunity to evaluate some of our strongest Ph.D. students through the teaching residency program; and work with the Michigan faculty to weave our cutting-edge research into their undergraduate programs.

In this report the Committee makes specific recommendations in several areas:

1. Preparing Future Faculty
2. Providing Research Opportunities to Faculty and Students
3. Developing Intellectual Linkages between Institutions

The Committee provides several observations concerning important issues such as funding, administration, formal agreements, and extension of the alliance model to a broader class of institutions. In particular, the Committee suggests the exploration an alliance with the group of outstanding liberal arts colleges belonging to the Great Lakes College Association.

The Committee also considered possible alliances with comprehensive universities. To this end it launched exploratory discussions with Eastern Michigan University. However, the significant differences between faculty environments and roles in a research university and a comprehensive university created additional complexities we were unable to resolve during our period of investigation. Nevertheless, we continue to believe there is a significant positive potential in such alliances, and we have suggested some further steps the University might wish to take to explore such possibilities.

Introduction and Charge

The University-College Partnership Study Committee was charged by the Dean of the Graduate School with conducting a feasibility study of possible partnerships linking high caliber liberal arts colleges with the University of Michigan. In particular, the Committee was asked to:

- Consider a range of possible programs of varying sizes, aimed at different university groups and disciplines, and involving differing degrees of ambition and complexity, including the possibility of later expansion to involve other institutions.
- Consult the leadership and other interested parties at all involved campuses (and other institutions or agencies as you deem desirable) to solicit information and opinions on alternate programs.
- Assess the financial implications of alternatives and explore the possibility of foundation support (NSF, Kellogg, Ford, other) for developing and maintaining varying sorts of partnership programs.
- Explore the possibility of a partnership with a nation foundation (e.g., Woodrow Wilson Fellowship Foundation) for forming a national program of cooperative efforts between liberal arts colleges and research universities.
- Explore the possibility of building the infrastructure necessary to explore these partnerships, such as computer network linkages, administrative support, and any necessary or desirable changes in academic policies.

The complete charge to the Committee and the membership of the committee is provided in an appendix to this report.

Background

Of particular interest was an exploration of ways that the University might build alliances with liberal arts colleges that enhance its preparation of future college professors. There has been increasing concern that the highly specialized, research dominated focus of today's Ph.D. programs is not well aligned to producing the type of faculty members needed by the broader higher education enterprise. Furthermore, there is increasing concern about the difficulty that many Ph.D. graduates have in finding positions in higher education. In 1997 42,427 doctorates were awarded in United States, an increase of nearly a third from a decade earlier. Many of these graduates will be frustrated and defeated in their search for faculty positions. Some of this is due to a mismatch between the Ph.D. production and the academic marketplace. Institutional needs for graduate research and teaching assistants tend to drive the size of our graduate programs rather than the needs of the higher education enterprise. Yet it is also true that most graduates have relatively limited experience in teaching, awareness of the qualities of colleges and universities beyond the research university where they received their doctoral training, and knowledge of the broader role of faculty in an academic community. The difficult job market for new PhDs is, to some extent, the result of not getting the right preparation for the jobs that exist.

Few believe that there is a need to replace the research training that is the heart of doctoral study in America. Rather, there is a need to broaden the concept of academic professionalism by including preparation for teaching and for service. Several groups have called for augmenting the graduate training process with internships or residencies that emphasize the faculty roles of teaching and service in the broader higher education enterprise. The Modern Language Association recommended that “doctoral programs familiarize students with the complex systems of postsecondary education in this country and offer not just courses but also mentored internships, residencies, and exchanges among institutions. The National Academy of Sciences has similarly called for the development of internship programs in teaching-intensive colleges and universities as one way to prepare doctoral students for broader faculty roles.

For past several years, two dozen major research universities have participated in the Preparing Future Faculty program, sponsored in part by the Pew Charitable Trust, that provides teaching experiences for their graduate students at liberal arts colleges. Hence one of our first objectives was to explore the possibility of similar alliances between the University of Michigan and liberal arts colleges for such purposes.

It was also clear, however, that there were many other potential benefits associated with such alliances. For example, faculty members and students at liberal arts colleges increasingly seek access to the research opportunities characterizing research universities. The undergraduate curriculum characterizing teaching-intensive institutions can become obsolete in the face of the rapid evolution of knowledge in fields such as the life sciences and physical sciences. The vast library and laboratory resources of a major research university are difficult to match with the limited resources of most liberal arts colleges. Yet, with emerging information and telecommunications technology, it is now possible to link together scholars and students in such a way as to facilitate intellectual interactions and share resources such as libraries and experimental apparatus. Examples here include digital libraries and collaboratories.

So too, liberal arts colleges produce many of the undergraduate students who continue on to graduate school at major research universities. There is considerable interest among graduate faculties in both influencing the undergraduate education these students receive and in recruiting them into graduate programs.

More broadly, there have been suggestions that a key theme of higher education in the years ahead would be alliances and networks that leverage and enhance the capabilities of colleges and universities to serve society. If properly structured, such alliances would allow institutions of various types to focus on their strengths, while relying on their partners in the alliance to help respond to broader societal needs.

Guidelines for the Discussions

With this in mind, the Committee suggested at the outset the following guidelines for potential relationships:

From the University of Michigan perspective:

- Provide advanced graduate students and postdocs with teaching experiences in undergraduate intensive institutions such as liberal arts colleges and comprehensive four-year universities.
- Through interaction with faculty in these institutions, develop a better understanding among our own graduate faculty of needs and opportunities characterizing the broader higher education enterprise.
- Provide our own graduate and professional programs with better access to outstanding graduates of liberal arts colleges.
- Develop relationships between UM programs and those of partner institutions by establishing intellectual linkages

From the perspective of liberal arts college partners:

- Provide faculty and students with access to the research environment, faculty, facilities and research opportunities of the University of Michigan.
- Partner institutions giving advanced teaching opportunities to our top graduate students and postdoctoral scholars might evaluate them as potential faculty members.
- Build intellectual relationships between programs and faculty that would enliven curriculum and facilitate faculty development.

The Committee chose to begin such explorations with Oberlin College and Kalamazoo College, because of the outstanding quality of these institutions, the number of their undergraduates who continue graduate study at Michigan, and the number of Michigan faculty who are alumni of these colleges. The potential for mutual benefit between the University of Michigan and Oberlin College and Kalamazoo College (and other similar highly quality liberal arts colleges) was soon apparent, with in collaboration with these institutions, the Committee developed the set of recommendations conveyed in this report.

At the outset, the Committee expressed strong interest in broadening the alliance exploration effort beyond liberal arts colleges to include comprehensive universities. Because of its proximity, Eastern Michigan University was selected as the prototype for further study, although the Committee was also very interested in UM-Dearborn as a second candidate for such an alliance. However, developing a strategy for interacting with comprehensive universities such as Eastern Michigan University was somewhat more challenging, in part because of the significant differences between faculty environments. The Committee eventually decided to regard the potential of alliances with comprehensive universities as a “work-in-progress”, requiring further discussion at the faculty level. This report suggests some possible further steps for such a dialog.

Committee Activities

The Committee met monthly to discuss, plan, and monitor a developing dialog with participating colleges and universities. The chair contacted the provosts at each institution, and then accompanied by Assistant Dean Homer Rose, traveled to each campus to meet with the president, the provost, and various faculty members to discuss potential relationships. We encouraged each institution to form its own faculty committee, in parallel with the Michigan committee, so that each institution could approach the discussions from the most beneficial perspective. The chair and members of the Committee contacted several foundations to explore possible interests and learn more about similar activities elsewhere.

In early spring, the provosts and faculty representatives from each potential partner institution visited Ann Arbor to meet with the chair and members of the Committee and share the results of their own faculty discussions. The Committee also had discussions with representatives from key campus constituencies, including the Office of the Provost, the Office of the Vice President for Research, the Colleges of Literature, Science, and Arts and the College of Engineering, and, of course, the Rackham School of Graduate Studies.

The final meetings of the Committee concerned converging on several specific recommendations and agreeing on a draft report.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Preparing Future Faculty programs:

- To establish fellowships or residencies that would allow advanced graduate students or postdoctoral scholars to spend one or two years in a supervised teaching role at a liberal arts college, with the involvement of senior faculty mentors from both institutions. Note that faculty from UM, Oberlin, and Kalamazoo all agreed that such residencies would be most appropriate for postdoctoral scholars. Furthermore, all institutions believed that a priority should be given to graduate students or postdoctoral scholars with a particular interest in pedagogical issues and the scholarship of teaching.
- To enable the fellows/residents to maintain a relationship with their Michigan research group, perhaps by occasional visits back to Michigan or by their graduate advisor or research group leader to their liberal arts college.
- To provide fellows/residents with the opportunity to teach at least one advanced course in an area related to their research specialty while in residence at the liberal arts college.

Recommendation 2: Providing Research Opportunities to Faculty and Students

- To provide faculty members from partner institutions with research opportunities through sabbatical or summer session appointments in Michigan research groups.
- To create a faculty development program that would provide mid-career faculty members at liberal arts college with an opportunity to “go back to school” and explore new directions at Michigan. Here, the Michigan Journalist-in-Residence program might provide a model.
- Provide undergraduate research opportunities at Michigan for undergraduate students from liberal arts colleges. Although there is intense demand for such UROP experiences from Michigan undergraduates during the academic year, there is a sense that there may be such opportunities for summer research experiences. Furthermore, network technology might provide access to research involvement by liberal arts college undergraduates during the academic term.
- Establish robust electronic linkages between Michigan and partner institutions, providing access to research resources such as libraries, databases, collaboratories and research groups.
- Provide faculty from partnering institutions with assistance in learning the techniques of grantsmanship (e.g., pursuing sponsored research grants).

Recommendation 3: Intellectual Linkages between Institutions

- Establish relationships between the faculty development organizations on each campus (e.g., CRLT at Michigan).
- Conduct joint conferences on issues of teaching and scholarship that would bring together faculty from participating institutions.
- Establishing visiting lectureships that would allow Michigan faculty to visit partner campuses, giving lectures, meeting with students and faculty, and hopefully gaining better understanding of the nature of these institutions.
- Establish relationships between particular departments, so that Michigan’s research perspective might be used to aid partner institutions in curriculum development.

Recommendation 4: General Recommendations

- All partner institutions stressed the importance of giving the proposed alliance sufficiently high visibility to provide the credibility for faculty and program participation.
- Clearly identify the units in each institution responsible for the brokering and monitoring of the relationship (e.g., at Michigan this would probably involve the Graduate School, the Office of the VP-Research, the Office of the Provost, and CRLT).

Mechanics

Funding Sources

There are a number of possibilities for funding the early stages of such alliances between research universities and liberal arts colleges. Both the Pew Charitable Trust and the National Science Foundation have funded such Preparing Future Faculty programs, and the Woodrow Wilson Fellowship Foundation has expressed strong interest and a willingness to help Michigan find support. It is the Committee's sense that funding for the traditional Preparing Future Faculty residency efforts are best pursued at the discipline level, e.g., Professor Brian Coppola's recent success in obtaining NSF funding for such efforts in chemistry.

To launch the broader alliances envisioned in this report, Michigan should work with Oberlin College and Kalamazoo College (or perhaps the Great Lakes College Association) to seek major funding from a foundation with strong midwestern interests such as the Kellogg Foundation or the Mott Foundation. Key in obtaining significant funding would be the development of a creative proposal, e.g., the "virtual university system" effort based on Internet2.

In any event, it is likely that some level of University funding will be necessary to attract and sustain such alliances. It is the opinion of this Committee that the benefits of such alliances merit this investment.

Administrative Support

These alliances will require participation from many places in the University: the Graduate School, the Office of the Provost, the Office of the Vice President for Research, several of the schools and colleges (in particular LS&A), and the participating departments. Coordination will be essential. Because of the early stress on the Preparing Future Faculty program, the Committee recommends that the Graduate School take the lead in launching and monitoring these programs. However it is also clear that the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching can play a critical role.

Formal Agreements

All three institutions indicated the importance of a formal agreement among institutions in providing the necessary visibility, credibility, and support to ensure faculty participation. Although this agreement might be phased in the early stages, some level of institutional commitment at the level of the provost or president will be necessary.

Next Steps

Steering Groups: It is clear that the success of any such alliances will depend on building strong relationships among faculty members at the partnering institutions. Such relationships can be built upon common intellectual interests as well as alumni ties. To this end, the Committee recommends that small University steering committees be assembled for each partnering institution (at this point Oberlin College and Kalamazoo College). These committees should consist both of faculty members with particular interest in graduate student

training and faculty members with alumni ties to the participating institution. These steering committees would help launch, monitor, and sustain the full array of interactions between the University of Michigan and the liberal arts college. The steering committees would report to the Graduate School.

Preparing Future Faculty: The initial effort should be to develop residency programs for recent Michigan Ph.D. graduates in liberal arts colleges, with Oberlin College and Kalamazoo College as the model sites. A small committee should be formed to develop the detailed structure of such programs, working closely with the UM-Oberlin and UM-Kalamazoo steering committees. The PFF committee should have representatives from the Graduate School, CRLT, as well as those faculties with ongoing or previous experience with such programs.

Joint Faculty Colloquium on Undergraduate Education: The Graduate School, the Office of the Provost, and the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching should consider sponsoring a colloquium or workshop for faculty from the University of Michigan, Oberlin College, and Kalamazoo College to share perspectives on the character and challenge of undergraduate education. This would not only provide an opportunity to share and contrast the differences between undergraduate education in a major research university and liberal arts colleges, but it would also be an important step in building closer relationships among the faculties of these institutions.

Programmatic Relationships: Working with representatives from Oberlin and Kalamazoo, identify key departments or programs for exploring and building broader intellectual interactions (e.g., faculty and student research participation, faculty exchanges).

Funding Possibilities: The University should explore the potential for funding the development of these alliances with key foundations. The efforts to build a Preparing Future Faculty program at Michigan should probably be discipline-specific. For example, the National Science Foundation already has such programs in place in the sciences. The Mellon Foundation or Pew Charitable Trust might be prospects for a PFF program in the humanities. The development of broader alliances between liberal arts colleges and the University of Michigan could be a topic of interest to the Kellogg Foundation, particularly to the extent that it was focused on midwestern liberal arts colleges. Bob Weisbuch of the Woodrow Wilson Fellowship Foundation has expressed a particular interest in the broader program and might be a useful resource in identifying funding opportunities. Because of the need to coordinate these fund-raising efforts with other priorities of the University, this activity probably should be directed by the Graduate Dean and the Provost.

Comprehensive Universities: Finally, a word on the relationship between the University of Michigan and comprehensive universities such as Eastern Michigan University and UM-Dearborn. The Committee believes there is significant potential for such alliances, particularly for institutions with an organizational or geographical proximity to UM-Ann Arbor. Closer relationships between faculties and programs could benefit all. For example,

Eastern Michigan University is one of the nation's largest source of K-12 teachers. A relationship with Eastern Michigan University's School of Education might provide an opportunity for the University of Michigan to bring to bear its great strengths in areas such as cognitive science, information technology, public policy, and science education on K-12 education. Furthermore, a coordinated effort involving EMU and UM-AA in technology-based economic development could have great benefit for the Washtenaw Country area. Similar opportunities exist with other potential comprehensive university partners.

However, there is also a very significant difference between the faculty roles, cultures, and environments of research universities such as UM-AA and comprehensive universities such as EMU. Hence, while some cooperative efforts such as economic development might be appropriate for consideration at this time, educational alliances directly involving faculty members require far more dialog and better understanding. Hence the Committee recommends that the provosts of both institutions create a joint faculty committee to better understand the potential and challenges of alliances between EMU and UM-AA, as a possible prototype of alliances with other comprehensive universities in Michigan. A similar joint faculty working group might also be considered for UM-Dearborn and UM-AA.

One Further Idea: A "Virtual" University System

As we noted earlier, the rapid evolution of information technology is allowing the creation of new types of structures for cooperation and collaboration, largely independent of space and time (asynchronous). For example, the University of Michigan is a national leader in the development of the collaboratory concept, in which scholars and students from widely dispersed institutions share and operate complex scientific instrumentation. Furthermore, the Internet2 project, developing the next generation of networking technology for academic research, is located in Ann Arbor. Hence the idea arises of exploring the possibility of creating a "virtual university system", using Internet2 to link together the University of Michigan with a group of outstanding liberal arts colleges such as the Great Lakes College Association. The rapid buildup of federal funding in this area (the so-called "IT-squared" initiative in the FY2000 federal budget proposal) suggests the potential for major federal funding of such experiments.

Concluding Remarks

It is the conclusion of the University-College Partnership Study Committee that alliances between the University of Michigan and outstanding liberal arts colleges such as Oberlin College and Kalamazoo College would offer very significant opportunities for enhancing the quality of graduate education and opening up new intellectual opportunities for faculty and students. There is strong interest on the part of these two colleges in participating in an experiment with the University of Michigan aimed at developing a paradigm for a partnership between research universities and liberal arts colleges. The committee believes that certain aspects of such a relationship are sufficiently

well-defined and meritorious (e.g., mentored teaching residencies, joint faculty-student research interactions, a joint faculty workshop on undergraduate education), that funding should be sought and these programs launched as first steps. By establishing faculty steering committees for each particular relationship, further opportunities can be identified and launched.

Although the Committee was unable to make specific recommendations at this time concerning alliances between the University of Michigan and comprehensive universities such as Eastern Michigan University, it believes that this, too, is an area with some potential. It recommends launching a joint faculty working group to build a better sense of understanding of the challenges and opportunities in such an alliance.

It is the belief of the Committee that alliances among colleges and universities of quite different character will become increasingly important in the years ahead. The University of Michigan should begin now to explore such possibilities with liberal arts colleges through joint experiments such as those suggested in this report.