

## **CIEL Performance Narrative and Evaluator's Report November 2006**

The Consortium for Innovative Environments in Learning (CIEL) was a project designed to share institutional, structural, pedagogical, curricular, and co-curricular practices in student-centered learning. The original 6 members (Alverno College, The Evergreen State College, Fairhaven College of Western Washington University, Hampshire College, New College of Florida, Pitzer College) and its affiliate member, Daemen College, worked to provide mutual support, share best practices, and provide outreach to the higher education community throughout the 5 years of the grant, from the planning year in 2001-02 until the end of the grant period in August 2006.

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**Overview:** In response to the increasing calls for change in higher education over the past two decades, a group of innovative colleges – public and private – came together to find ways to incubate new practices, institutionalize successful innovations, and expand the influence of those innovations among themselves and within the higher education community. All six of the charter members, plus Daemen College and Arizona International College (a grant partner until it was closed in 2002) represent quintessential elements of Deweyian educational philosophy: interdisciplinary, student-centered, experiential, reflective, and theory-to-practice in orientation. These are progressive, experimental institutions that value change and responsiveness to new circumstances. Experimentation is a fragile process at the institutional level, and the new Consortium was envisioned to sustain and legitimize experimentation by putting similar institutions in dialogue with each other for purposes of mutual support and sharing and to represent their work regionally and nationally. From the start, the project enjoyed strong support from the senior administration at all the member campuses, serving academic administrators, faculty, and students at each one. Each year, the Consortium has attracted broader participation on each campus and has established an increased presence nationally through a growing relationship with the Association of American Colleges and Universities and through the Consortium's website, [www.cielearn.org](http://www.cielearn.org).

**The Problems:** There is probably no institution of higher education than cannot lay claim to some level of innovation. But innovation typically occurs at the margins of organizations and seldom makes it into the central mission and structure. Great ideas come and go, often disappearing because existing institutional structures are not compatible with innovation or change. However, calls for change in higher education are not so much about creating a new program here or there but about core issues in the aims, practices, constituents, and outcomes of college learning, and particularly in effective teaching at the undergraduate level. To function in this climate, model institutions that have innovation and experimentation at the core of their mission and in their daily practice are needed. They are institutions whose history of experimentation could be strengthened if put in partnership with similar institutions; institutions whose distinctiveness

makes them fragile in a political and social climate that demands, simultaneously, both change and homogenization. The demise of one of the charter members in the Consortium, Arizona International College, illustrates just how fragile such distinctive institutions are.

The original members of the Consortium can reasonably lay claim to being colleges of this sort. The project enabled the member schools to establish strong ties with each other. In the course of creating this network, we discovered that the challenges of working on this scale involved more than simply sharing best practices. The success of the Consortium required tremendous energies internally to articulate the Consortium's mission and the opportunities it created, to engage faculty and students in creating opportunities, and to overcome the entropy that sets in when innovation becomes more a static and secure fait accompli than a dynamic and potentially risky practice. It also involved some sober reflection at the institutional level about what might be imported and what might be exported, and the development of a broad range of faculty talent to do just that. The grant proposal to FIPSE talked about how innovative colleges have "tended to be isolated and pre-occupied with their own evolving identify and needs." While one rationale for the project was to enable these "voices in the wilderness" to be heard in larger circles where more effective educational practices were being called for, it became equally clear that the schools themselves faced continuing internal challenges to avoid complacency on the one hand and hubris on the other. The project has turned out to be as much an investment in helping innovative schools continue to innovate as it has in getting the word out.

**Project History and Description:** The early work of the project involved building the social capital necessary to identify commonalities, to build and expand commitment, and to exchange ideas. Parallel to finding the glue to hold the group together was the task of creating organizational structures, such a leadership group, and operating principles that would give the Consortium some stability. It would be impossible to overstate the importance of travel support for this work because there is simply no substitute for face-to-face interaction sustained over time. The negotiation of a Memorandum of Agreement among the members that stated the Consortium's mission and operating principles, including faculty and student exchanges and regular meetings of faculty was an important early outcome in creating commitments to inter-institutional work.

Two other early accomplishments are significant: the development of a website and the creation of an on-line student journal. The thinking of the leadership group was that the Consortium had to create some tangible products of its work. The website was one such product that is now organized not just as a repository of the Consortium's work but also as a driver to provide regular opportunities for exchange. The on-line journal, which is housed on the website, is published annually and provides a presence for the Consortium among students as well as faculty. It is particularly important as an indicator of the student-centered flavor of each campus's educational philosophy.

The next major development was creating the position of Executive Director. The Consortium benefited from high level administrators as its leadership group (individually called campus coordinators). The downside of this arrangement was that while the campus coordinators were able to make decisions on behalf of their colleges, they were also already over-taxed with demands of their positions at home. The group was long on ideas but short on execution. The

measure of their commitment to the potential of the Consortium was their agreement to use institutional monies to create a one-third time position for an Executive Director, whose responsibilities were also outlined in the MOA. This position provided stability, follow-through, visibility, and leadership while maintaining the collaborative spirit that continues to animate the Consortium.

Meetings of the leadership group increasingly took on a focus on faculty and eventually student inclusion, in addition to the administration and leadership of the project. The initial meetings rotated around the member campuses and were initially concentrated on learning about distinctive features of each, such as reflective self-assessment (Fairhaven), international study (New College), self-constructed programs (Hampshire), learning communities (Evergreen). A continuing challenge has been to involve faculty in ways that spark collaboration. Organizing annual Fall meetings around a compelling pedagogical and intellectual theme to give them more the intensity of a workshop has been a fruitful approach. One outgrowth of this orientation is the preparation of a collection of essays on teaching for social justice and responsibility. The book project has the virtues of providing a publishing venue for faculty who are not heavily involved in publication, increasing the presence and legitimacy of the Consortium on individual campuses, and providing a different kind of visibility nationally.

One of the unanticipated kinks in the project, as is likely the case with any activity carried out over this many years, were changes in key players. The closing of Arizona International College meant not just that the Consortium lost its lead institution within the first year of the grant, but also that Ed Clausen, who had been instrumental in developing the project, left AIC for a new position at Daemen College. Grant management shifted to Hampshire College, with a new project director and a new budget office. That project director subsequently retired and was replaced by another, who is himself in the process of retiring. The transition period interrupted the development of the Consortium for nearly a year and required considerable understanding on the part of FIPSE staff.

As leadership for the project stabilized and campus involvement increased, the Consortium was able to capitalize on emerging interests on the campuses. Several members were interested in electronic portfolios, so Alverno College hosted a day-long retreat with Judith Patton from Portland State University as a consultant. Daemen College, New College, and Evergreen State went on to adapt the use of electronic portfolios on their campuses.

Assessing the impact of the unique educational programs was an ongoing interest within the Consortium. Assessment is a challenge at these campuses because of the holistic quality of such highly experiential learning. Though Alverno is known for its work in assessment, its approach was not really compatible with the self-designed, interdisciplinary programs characteristic of the other schools. One promising dimension was the assessment of senior theses. A subgroup of campuses (Alverno, Hampshire, and New College) worked with a substantial sample of senior papers to develop a rubric for evaluating such work. The continuing value of this product is in helping students and their advisors anticipate what is expected of superior work and gear their efforts accordingly. The rubric has been disseminated on the CIEL website and in its newsletter – an illustration of how assessment can be used to shape better outcomes.

Increased student involvement was an obvious piece of the project for schools that emphasize student-centered learning as fully as the CIEL schools do. Student exchanges had been an early feature of the consortium but were slow to get started. Publicity about the consortium among students was as much a challenge as publicity among faculty and staff. A leadership group of students joined the Fall, 2004 meeting at Evergreen and formed themselves into a cadre of student campus coordinators whose mission was outreach to their respective student bodies. The students were eager for as many opportunities as they could get to engage in the work of the Consortium and to work with each other. In the spring of 2005, the Consortium sponsored its first Student Symposium. Two students from each campus, and the campus coordinators, convened at New College to present their work on major academic projects. The second annual symposium was held at Pitzer College in Spring, 2006, involving twice the number of students as the first symposium; the third symposium is scheduled for Spring 2007 at one of the Consortium's new members, Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina, and the fourth for Spring 2008 at Fairhaven College, in partnership with the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship on Teaching and Learning. Since inception, nearly 50 students have presented their work, with opportunities for 50 more students in Spring 2007. It is no coincidence that since the Symposium has begun, interest in student exchanges has also increased dramatically. The Consortium is gaining increased visibility among the respective student bodies.

Concurrent with the internal focus of the Consortium on faculty and student outreach, the Consortium has also engaged in national outreach to the higher education community. Consortium members have convened panels every year at the national Association of American Colleges and Universities meetings. Audiences for CIEL panels have grown each year, last winter with a standing room only crowd at the Washington, D. C. meeting. CIEL's track record has been acknowledged this year with the formation of a partnership with the AAC&U and the invitation to offer both a pre-conference workshop on preparing junior faculty for interdisciplinary teaching and a panel session on assessing the impact of experiential learning. Though participation is hard to gauge at events such as these, a conservative estimate is that representatives from at least 40 institutions have been among the audiences for CIEL presentations.

Another form of outreach has been the plan to increase CIEL's membership. Membership enables the Consortium to bring more campuses into conversation with each other, and, we believe, strengthens each one through this affiliation. CIEL's original membership of six principle members and one affiliated member now stands at twelve, now including Gallatin School of Individualized Study (NYU), New Century College (George Mason University), Berea College, Prescott College, and Johnson C. Smith University. The Consortium looks toward a membership of about 20, a number big enough to ensure a level of financial security but small enough to enable close working relationships.

The project has achieved success in all three of its initial goals of mutual support, sharing of best practices, and higher education outreach. Some examples: In terms of mutual support, many of the impressive transformations at Daemen College illustrate the power that an affiliation with this Consortium can have in providing support, focus, legitimization, and motivation to pursue a more progressive educational mission. On a different scale, the meeting at Alverno College on electronic portfolios enabled several members, particularly New College, to institutionalize e-

portfolios at home. Pitzer College has made nearly all of its international study abroad sites available to Consortium members – a tremendous leveraging of resources and opening of opportunities to students on all these campuses. The Consortium has also enabled several smaller scale collaborations, such as a Hampshire College/Pitzer College liaison on study abroad; the development between Hampshire College and Prescott College of a residential southwest studies program, which, if successful, will become open to the whole Consortium; an Evergreen/Daemen collaboration on community sustainability that benefits from the comparative study of two urban communities; a sustained focus over two years on teaching for social justice and responsibility that has helped inform various campus activities from service learning to classroom pedagogy. Individual faculty and administrators have also traveled to various member campuses to provide consultation on specific topics, such as Karen Spear’s work with New College on academic leadership and with Berea College on designing and teaching courses on academic writing.

In terms of institutional sharing, the annual fall conference has been a powerful vehicle for deep sharing of teaching practices and curriculum transformation (particularly learning communities), as well as providing a venue for reflection, exposure to new ideas, and connection of faculty and administrators across the campuses. Faculty and staff at these progressive schools can become enmeshed in their own hype, and the character of the various CIEL convocations has been more about learning from each other than about showing off.

In terms of outreach, CIEL’s new partnership with the AAC&U is the culmination of years of determined presence in this organization, and gives CIEL the national, organizational visibility to disseminate the work of its campuses. In turn, having greater presence nationally is giving the member campuses opportunities to scrutinize their own practices and to see their work on a larger canvas. It is our belief that the campuses themselves are continually revitalized through our outreach efforts. The book project on Teaching for Social Justice (mentioned previously) is another manifestation of CIEL’s efforts to reach beyond the membership while simultaneously raising the bar for what happens at home. The Consortium’s success in becoming institutionalized, though always dependent on the discretionary monies available at the member schools, is, for now, a reality.

Evaluation: The project history and description just provided is interlaced with evidence of its impact. For a project of this sort, qualitative evaluation seemed, from the outset, the most useful approach. The project was successful in meeting all three of its goals: mutual support, sharing best practices, and higher education outreach. Another window on its effectiveness is through the external evaluator, Dr. Shelly Potts of Arizona State University. Dr. Potts has been associated with the project since its beginning, has collected data from every event, has interviewed key members of the leadership, and presented annual evaluations. Her report is included as Appendix One. The evaluation plan involved the following methodology and analysis procedures, excerpted from her final report:

“The following data collection methods were utilized throughout the project’s evaluation: participant observation of key CIEL-sponsored events, interviews with the CIEL Executive Director, surveys and focus groups of project stakeholders, and a critical review of CIEL documents, the website, and the listserv.

- Participant observation of key CIEL-sponsored events: The external evaluator attended and participated in numerous in-person and at-a-distance events. Observational checklists were implemented and extensive notes were taken. These data were triangulated with meeting agendas, handouts, and notes. Data were processed using constant comparative techniques.
- Interviews: Informal interviews were conducted with the Executive Director, former CIEL coordinator, and select campus administrators during the five years of the project. The interview format consisted of semi-structured questions conducted in person, via phone, and by email. Data were transcribed and analyzed using content analysis and constant comparison techniques. Themes were identified and confirming and disconfirming evidence quotes were incorporated.
- Surveys & Focus groups: The CIEL membership (faculty, staff, students, coordinators, etc.) was consulted and their opinions were gauged throughout the funding period. For example, participants at CIEL sponsored events were invited to provide feedback on the events and their activities and experiences related to CIEL, and their suggestions for future gatherings. Surveys consisted of forced-choice and open-ended items addressing the success of both the CIEL sponsored events and the consortium in general. Descriptive statistics were computed for the closed ended items. Text data were transcribed verbatim, and thematic content analysis was used to categorize the responses.

Focus groups consisted of facilitated discussions with event participants led by both the evaluator and the Executive Director. Protocols consisted of questions addressing perceptions, activities, preferences, and suggestions. Focus group data were transcribed verbatim, and thematic content analysis was used to categorize the responses.

- Critical review of CIEL documents, the CIELearn.org website, and the CIEL listserv: Project documents, the CIEL the website, and the listserv were reviewed on an ongoing basis during all years of the funding period. A checklist was used to determine the extent to which goals and objectives were achieved as well as the quality of these artifacts. The check list was revised annually upon consultation with project administration and stakeholders. The following types of documents were reviewed: grant proposal, rosters, website resource documents, annual reports, meeting materials (agendas, handouts, presentation materials, and summaries), consortium/convocation surveys, the CIEL Newsletter, and executive director reports. All aspects of the CIEL website were continually reviewed, and the listserv was monitored on a regular basis. Documents, the website, and the listserv were analyzed to determine the extent to which project goals and objectives were achieved. Achievement of government performance indicators of wider impact and institutionalization were also monitored.

In keeping with the multiple and mixed method focus of the evaluation, data were continually reviewed in light of data collected with previous methods. Data were analyzed using techniques and procedures appropriate for the type of data collected. At the close of the funding period, the

entire data corpus was again reviewed in light of the governmental performance indicators of outcomes, institutionalization, and wider impact.”

Another important dimension are voices from the individual campuses. Appendix Two provides reports from each of the seven principal campuses that get at an understanding of CIEL’s impact and specific illustrations of activities. These reports reveal the slightly different needs and expectations from one campus to another but indicate the high levels of investment and return that each campus has experienced. The most powerful theme in these reports is the intensity of what the campuses have learned from each other. Uniformly, the coordinators talk about how the close and sustained relations among the schools led to deeper and more lasting learning from each other. They distinguish the kind of exchange among the CIEL partners from the more superficial learnings at national meetings. The Consortium created many opportunities for sustained interactions at all levels: administrative, faculty, and students. The message is that the investment in Consortium membership is extremely worthwhile and may offer greater impact in a more cost-effective form than traditional modes of institutional exchange such as professional conferences.

As the Consortium moves forward, we expect to continue on the path we have established:

- Continued development of the membership
- Publication of the book on teaching for social justice and responsibility
- Research on the impacts of experiential learning
- Research and writing on ways to strengthen faculty development for interdisciplinary, experiential learning
- Continued grant seeking activity
- Continued development of a cadre of students to support the work of the consortium
- Continued development of the student and faculty exchange processes and regular use of this opportunity
- Continued exploration and use of technology, as appropriate, to allow for cross-campus course enrollments and sharing of special events such as speakers and the student symposium
- Continued dissemination of the CIEL e-newsletter to inform campus constituents of consortium activities and to share relevant information on teaching, assessment, and publications of note
- Continued an expanded national outreach

CIEL has a good history, in keeping with its mission of experimentation and risk-taking, of taking advantage of opportunities as they arise. While we need to continue to engage in strategic planning, we also need to be sensitive and responsive to emerging interests and opportunities.

Lessons Learned: The project benefited enormously from FIPSE’s flexibility and willingness to let the project follow its own course. What would come out of the project was in many ways unknown. Having the right balance between oversight and open-endedness was exactly the right thing for a project involving so many players. The no-cost grant extension was also extremely valuable because it acknowledged that a project of this scale takes time to build momentum. The

extension allowed us to make better financial decisions over a longer period of time rather than spending money against tight deadlines.

As the Consortium moves forward, there are three key challenges that we have faced and continue to face.

**Financial stability:** Grant support provided the necessary seed money that enabled the Consortium to establish itself as a viable entity. With FIPSE funding, the Consortium was able to create multiple opportunities for faculty and administrators to come together and build necessary social and intellectual capital through formal and informal exchanges. Institutional financial commitments, continuing beyond the grant period in the form of membership fees, have demonstrated the members' determination to maintain the consortium, while providing the strongest possible evidence that the consortium provides valuable services to its members. However, given the scarcity in institutional budgets and the increasingly limited availability of public and private grant monies, the Consortium operates on a shoestring budget that is inevitably tenuous. Financial stability will be a long-term challenge.

**Time and scale of operation:** The Consortium is best served by a leadership group of senior academic officers who are empowered to make decisions and have the experience and capacity to marshal institutional resources and generate participation. These are busy people, and making Consortium work a part of their workload is a challenge. Keeping the campuses – students, faculty, and staff – apprised of what the Consortium is and what it can offer is an ongoing task that requires more investment of time than anyone quite imagined at the outset. Likewise, negotiating every student exchange is time-consuming and complex. The future of this program requires a strong commitment to the value of going beyond one's home institution. The exchange program is a testament to the value that each school places on working with individual students, and a continuing affirmation that education involves teaching one student at a time. As the Consortium moves beyond the early years of establishing itself, the ongoing challenge is to find the appropriate scope of activity that provides value without stretching people's time and energy beyond capacity.

**Involvement and follow-through:** One of the realities of higher education today is that faculty and staff are stretched thin with multiple and competing commitments, yet their enthusiasm for new ideas remains high. CIEL has from the start been a powerful engine for imagining new and worthwhile projects, and any Consortium event has been a stimulus for generating excitement and possibility. Moving from good intentions and great ideas to implementation, however, is an ongoing struggle and a continued challenge, particularly in light of limitations in funding. The range of projects that the Consortium might take on is huge. We have not really tapped the potential of distance learning. We could and should become more of a national voice for faculty development in student-centered, experiential, interdisciplinary learning and the assessment of such practices. We would like to develop ways to share resources in student recruitment, technology, fund-raising, and even library holdings. We need to continue challenging ourselves to remain innovating institutions, true to our common philosophy and missions but forward-looking and creative. It is also clear that any one of these activities is time-intensive and expensive to launch and sustain.

Nevertheless, the original argument in the grant proposal still rings true: “Innovative institutions, rather than being viewed as being on the margins of higher education, should be seen as leaders whose experiences can be adapted to other colleges and universities to improve student learning and institutional culture. . . . Unlike in the past, when education was awash in resources and could afford to be smug in its intent and pedagogy, institutions of higher education today tout the need for student centeredness, liberal learning, interdisciplinarity, civic responsibility, visual literacy, diversity, globalism, interactive learning, service, and powerful assessment. These are all lessons that can be learned by drawing upon the vast reservoir of experiences of more innovative institutions.”

To this might be added one final observation from the CIEL project: that these are all lessons that are continuously learned, even by the institutions that most profess them, and they are learned only to the extent that the potential for change is embraced. What distinguishes these schools is not so much their specific practices. Learning communities, thematic studies, narrative evaluation, experiential learning, service learning for sustainability, an orientation toward social justice and responsibility, self-constructed academic programs – all these innovations and more can be found across the map of higher education. The real distinguishing feature is a campus ethos that stems from shared purposes, publicly expressed and routinely examined. The public and self-conscious nature of each institutions’ commitments creates a high degree of ownership and engagement that is the glue of each campus. In addition to sharing specific practices as they have developed at the various CIEL schools, perhaps the Consortium’s greater contribution as it moves forward is a closer examination of how this ethos can be created and sustained in the service of change and adaptation.

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Consortium for Innovative Environments in Learning

External Evaluation Report  
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## **Evaluation Overview**

The primary goal of the external evaluation was to provide an evaluative summary of the evaluative activities and programmatic achievements of the Consortium for Innovative Environments in Learning (CIEL) grant during the August 2001 – August 2006 funding period. The evaluation was conducted for three main purposes: (1) Inform program implementation by providing feedback on current and future activities, (2) Determine the extent to which the project met the goals, objectives, and outcomes stated in the funding proposal to the U.S. Department of Education, FIPSE program, and (3) Provide recommendations for future CIEL endeavors.

### External Evaluation Approach:

A “utilization focused evaluation approach” was followed during the implementation of the external evaluation of the *CIEL* project. Utilization-focused evaluations are designed to respond primarily to the questions raised by a variety of program stakeholders, particularly those individuals responsible for strategic direction and decision-making (Patton, 2001). This approach served to be both practical and feasible because it involved ongoing communication among the external evaluator, the CIEL Executive Director, and the project stakeholders, and it focused on the collection of data that were useful for determining project successes and limitations as previously defined in the project proposal. Measures allowed for critical analysis of the CIEL processes, outcomes, institutionalization, and wider impact.

No single evaluation method or approach is appropriate for all educational programs; rather, methods and measures are “selected based on the evaluation question(s) one is trying to answer, the context of the evaluation, and the values and perspectives of the stakeholders” (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen, 2004, p. 305). In order to maximize knowledge gain, credibility, and utility associated with the data gathered, the evaluation design incorporated multiple and mixed measures as well as a combination of direct and indirect data collection methodologies (Potts, 1998) . This strategy allowed the external evaluator to collect data that were useful for programmatic improvement and decision-making.

The evaluation of the CIEL program also incorporated both formative and summative components. By monitoring program implementation and outcomes and through providing timely and constructive feedback to the project director, program and evaluation strengths were maximized and shortcomings were remedied in a timely fashion. The evaluation also provided data useful for making critical decisions regarding program modification and dissemination.

The evaluation approach incorporated both internal and external components. The CIEL Executive Director also contributed to the evaluation efforts through the ongoing collection of data on program implementation and effectiveness and collection of ongoing feedback data from campus coordinators. Feedback from stakeholders was used for midcourse program adjustments. The external evaluator provided consultation

regarding strategies for internal evaluation as well as oversight of an independent evaluation of program activities and outcomes.

#### Evaluation methodology & analysis procedures:

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#### Evaluation Process & Constraints:

The project's evaluation was conducted according to the plan submitted in the original proposal. Evaluation data were collected throughout the grant period, and minimal difficulties (low response rates for web surveys) were experienced. Emphasis was placed on data triangulation from multiple sources as a strategy for minimizing negative affects of low response rates.

#### **Findings of the External Evaluation:**

Overall the Consortium of Innovative Environments in Learning was successful in attaining its three primary goals during the life of the FIPSE grant: (1) Mutual support for continued improvement and innovation in student learning, (2) Institutional sharing, and (3) Higher education outreach. Following is a summary of exemplary accomplishments as described by CIEL's Executive Director and underscored by member institution comments:

- *Mutual Support:* "In terms of mutual support, many of the impressive transformations at Daemen College illustrate the power that an affiliation with this Consortium can have in providing support, focus, legitimation, and motivation to pursue a more progressive educational mission. On a different scale, the meeting at Alverno College on electric portfolios enabled several members, particularly New College, to institutionalize e-portfolios at home. The Consortium has also enabled several collaborations among pairs of members such as a Hampshire College/Pitzer College liaison on study abroad; an Evergreen/Daemen collaboration on community sustainability; a sustained focus over two years on teaching for social justice and responsibility that has helped inform various campus activities from service learning to classroom pedagogy" (Spear, 2006). Faculty are collaborating on joint courses and publications, and they are visiting campuses to learn about innovations and to develop new partnerships. A

comment from a CIEL member supports this claim, "I look to CIEL as a reference group for strategies... The ability to consult with the CIEL coordinators when we face obstacles...is a tremendous resource."

- *Institutional Sharing*: "The annual fall conference has been a powerful vehicle for deep sharing of teaching practices and curriculum transformation (particularly learning communities), as well as providing a venue for reflection, exposure to new ideas, and connection of faculty and administrators across the campuses. Faculty and staff at these progressive schools can become enmeshed in their own hype, and the character of the various CIEL convocations has been more about learning from each other than about showing off" (Spear, 2006). Participants described CIEL-sponsored events as "encouraging and uplifting". One institution commented that "CIEL members have become some of our closest and most trusted colleagues. While we are associated with other national networks, in none of those other cases do we share as much information or reflect together on common interests or goals. ... Our CIEL colleagues are a critical network for us."
- *Higher Education Outreach*: "CIEL's new partnership with AAC&U is the culmination of years of determined presence with this organization, and (it) gives CIEL the national, organizational visibility to disseminate the work of its campuses. In turn, having greater presence nationally is giving the member campuses opportunities to scrutinize their own practices and see their work on a larger canvas. It is our belief that the campuses themselves are continually revitalized through our outreach efforts. The book project on Teaching Social Justice is another manifestation of CIEL's efforts to reach beyond the membership while simultaneously raising the bar for what happens at home" (Spear, 2006).

Following is a summary of the Consortium's major accomplishments organized by the governmental performance indicators:

*Outcomes:*

- Negotiated a Memorandum of Agreement among the original member institutions that specified the purposes of the organization, modes of collaboration, financial support from member organizations, role of the Executive Director, governance structure, and processes for student, faculty, and administrator exchanges.
- Held annual meetings of the CIEL consortium beginning in 2001, with foci on consortium leadership and management, and faculty and curriculum development, interdisciplinary and global education, and assessment. The 7<sup>th</sup> annual meeting is scheduled for fall 2007 at Berea College. Participants were surveyed about the successes and limitations of each event, and feedback was used to plan future activities and meetings. The events were quite successful among the CIEL membership as evidenced by continued and expanded

participation and positive feedback shared on the post event surveys, participant focus groups, and in informal exchanges with the evaluator and Executive Director.

- Held two spring symposia for the presentation of student research and produced a view book showcasing the event. The 3<sup>rd</sup> symposium is scheduled for spring 2008 at Johnson C. Smith University; the spring 2008 symposium, slated for Fairhaven College, is a partnership with the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship on Teaching and Learning. Since inception, nearly 50 students have presented their work at CIEL symposia.
- Held bi-annual meetings of the CIEL leadership since the inception of the consortium to develop opportunities, plan events, and engage in strategic planning.
- Created and maintained a consortium website, [www.cielearn.org](http://www.cielearn.org) that provides information on the consortium with links to each campus, features scholarship by consortium members and other resources for educators, summarizes consortium activities, hosts the on-line student journal, and facilitates conversations among participants in consortium projects.
- Produced a CIEL brochure.
- Created an on-line journal.
- Facilitated multiple student exchanges across member institutions each year. The number of student exchanges has increased each year.
- Negotiated the use of Pitzer College study abroad sites for use by consortium members.
- Created an inter-institutional network for collaborative projects, consulting, exchange of information, student exchanges, and partnerships involving subgroups of the membership.
- Launched multiple collaborations among member institutions in support of faculty development, service learning, shared use of facilities, and curriculum development and assessment.
- Work in progress on a collection of essays from consortium faculty on Teaching for Social Justice and Responsibility, with expression of interest from Stylus Publishing to publish the manuscript.

*Institutionalization:*

- Negotiated a Memorandum of Agreement among the original member institutions that specified the purposes of the organization, modes of collaboration, financial support from member organizations, role of the Executive Director, governance structure, and processes for student, faculty, and administrator exchanges.
- Created membership fee and governance structures that will allow the Consortium to be self-sustaining beyond the grant period.
- Two years before funding ended, consortium members created and staffed the position of Executive Director to give the organization infrastructure, ensure continuity in carrying out initiatives, and provide organizational leadership. This funding continues in the form of annual institutional membership fees.
- Created an infrastructure for student exchanges.
- Faculty and students are being exposed to CIEL on their own campuses through dissemination of the CIEL newsletter, on-campus orientations, campus marketing collateral and websites, and new programs for faculty and students.
- Methods, procedures, and tools are in place for continued evaluation of Consortium processes, outcomes, and impact. Established processes for using feedback for programmatic modification and organizational change exist.
- “The members’ willingness to make continuing financial commitments to the Consortium is the strongest possible evidence of institutionalization and continuation of this project. Broadening the CIEL membership to its present group of twelve and ultimately to about 20 campuses (will provide) greater financial stability without sacrificing the close professional ties that make genuine sharing and support possible” (Spear, 2006).

*Wider Impact:*

- Increased CIEL membership from 7 to 12 institutions, with a target membership of 20 institutions.
- Created and maintained a consortium website, [www.cielearn.org](http://www.cielearn.org) that provides information on the consortium with links to each campus, features scholarship by consortium members and other resources for educators, summarizes consortium activities, hosts the on-line student journal, and facilitates conversations among participants in consortium projects.
- Made presentations on aspects of progressive education and served on panels at national higher education meetings. For example, CIEL is featured prominently at the 2007 meeting of the Association of American Colleges and Universities for its presentation on assessing experiential learning. CIEL members also use

these venues to present summaries of consortium activities and accomplishments.

- Developed a partnership with the Association of American Colleges and Universities.
- Developed and disseminated regular newsletters on Consortium activities and opportunities. Email newsletters are emailed to each consortium member and are distributed extensively among the faculty and staff communities on individual campuses.
- Work in progress on a collection of essays from consortium faculty on Teaching for Social Justice and Responsibility, with expression of interest from Stylus Publishing to publish the manuscript.

According to the CIEL Executive Director, Karen Spear, while pursuing its goals, the Consortium experienced struggles in the following areas: financial stability, time and scope of operation, and member involvement and follow through.

- *Financial stability:* “Grant support provided the necessary seed money that enabled the Consortium to establish itself as a viable entity. With FIPSE funding, the Consortium was able to create multiple opportunities for faculty and campus administrators to come together and build necessary social and intellectual capital through formal and informal exchanges. Institutional financial commitments, continuing beyond the grant period in the form of membership fees, have demonstrated the members’ determination to maintain the Consortium, while providing the strongest possible evidence that the Consortium provides valuable services to its members. However, given the scarcity in institutional budgets and the increasingly limited availability of grant monies, the Consortium operates on a shoestring budget that is inevitably tenuous. Financial stability will be a long-term challenge.”
- *Time and scope of operation:* “The Consortium is best served by a leadership group of senior academic officers who are empowered to make decisions and have the experience and capacity to marshal institutional resources and generate participation. These are busy people, and making Consortium work part of their workload is a challenge. As the Consortium moves beyond the early years of establishing something new, an ongoing challenge is to find the appropriate scope of activity that provides value without stretching people’s time and energy beyond capacity.”
- *Member involvement and follow through:* “One of the realities of higher education today is that faculty and staff are stretched thin with multiple and competing commitments, yet their enthusiasm for new ideas remains high. CIEL has from the start been long on imagining new and worthwhile projects, and any

Consortium event has been a powerful stimulus for generating excitement and possibility. Moving from good intentions and great ideas to implementation, however, is an ongoing struggle and a continued challenge, particularly in light of limitations on funding.”

Despite these continued struggles, CIEL continues the pursuit of its primary goals of mutual support, institutional sharing, and outreach. Following is a list of the Consortium’s plans, goals, and expectations as solidified in the most recent leadership meeting. These activities are in line with established goals.

- Continued development of the membership;
- Continued grant seeking activity;
- Continued development of a cadre of students to support the work of the Consortium;
- Continued development of the student and faculty exchange processes and regular use of this opportunity;
- Continued exploration and use of technology, as appropriate, to allow for cross-campus course enrollments and sharing of special events such as speakers and the student symposium;
- Continued dissemination of the CIEL e-newsletter to inform campus constituents of Consortium activities and to share relevant information on teaching, assessment, and publications of note;
- Continued national outreach; and
- Hosting of coffees, etc. at national meetings of faculty or staff to bring Consortium members together.

**Recommendations:**

- Continue to implement current evaluation data collection processes and tools and use feedback for organizational/programmatic modification.
- Pursue established and mutually agreed upon goals as they have the support of Consortium membership.
- Appropriate structures exist for resource acquisition and allocation; however, efforts should be expanded to allow for new inter-institutional collaboration and exchanges.
- Maintain employ of current Executive Director as she has served the organization well and has been instrumental in CIEL’s goal attainment.
- Continue to expand web communication efforts and resource offerings.