

## **NEWS**

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<https://news.uci.edu/2018/11/27/uci-to-lead-national-study-on-value-of-liberal-arts-education/>

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### **UCI to lead national study on value of liberal arts education**

**Mellon Foundation-funded project will identify ways to improve student experiences, outcomes**

**Irvine, Calif., Nov. 27, 2018** — The University of California, Irvine has been named by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation as the national pilot site for an interdisciplinary team of researchers led by the School of Education to study approaches that will increase our understanding of what makes a liberal arts education so valuable.

These scholars will direct the development and implementation of a state-of-the-art measurement project to explore how data from learning management systems and other sources can be combined with institutional records to promote models of undergraduate student success.

“We are honored that the Mellon Foundation has chosen UCI to create and manage this important new tool,” said Chancellor Howard Gillman. “Our School of Education is one of the nation’s leaders in the science of education, and this innovative project has tremendous potential to impact educational outcomes and student achievement.”

“Colleges and universities face growing pressure to prove their value to their students and society at large,” said Mariët Westermann, Mellon Foundation executive vice president for programs and research. “In a society hungry for data and evidence, simply claiming these values of the liberal arts no longer suffices. Developing thoughtful and robust models and measures of the economic, social and personal outcomes of a liberal arts education will greatly help all of us understand better what the

worth of such an education is and communicate that value to academic decision-makers and the public.”

Supported by a \$1.115 million grant from the Mellon Foundation, UCI’s three-year Next-Generation Undergraduate Success Measurement Project will collect, measure and analyze data on a random sample of 1,050 UCI students: 500 incoming freshmen, 250 incoming junior transfers, 250 continuing juniors and 50 freshmen in the Campuswide Honors Program.

Traditional institutional information on course progression, credit accumulation and grades, as well as student survey responses on educational experiences and satisfaction, will be supplemented with data from campus learning management systems and new experiential sampling methods, such as contacting participants via their smartphones at random times of the week to track their academic and extracurricular activities.

“Technology presents researchers and stakeholders with new opportunities to capture more fully experiences and pathways to enhance institutional performance and undergraduate outcomes and to advance educational science,” said principal investigator Richard Arum, dean of the School of Education. “We are committed to a data-driven continuous improvement model that tracks performance, innovates on curriculum and iterates instructional design. As educators, we have a responsibility to be more intentional about how we ensure student achievement.”

The Next-Generation Undergraduate Success Measurement Project emerged out of the Mellon Foundation’s Value of the Liberal Arts initiative, which identified the need for deeper, more holistic and authentic measurement of educational experiences and outcomes. The protocols and measures created by UCI will be used for the foundation’s proposed longitudinal national study of a set of colleges and universities, “College and Beyond 2.0,” which will be organized and housed by the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research at the University of Michigan.

“UCI is at the forefront of educational science and has the institutional capacity to lead this project,” said co-principal investigator Michael Dennin, dean of the Division of Undergraduate Education and vice provost for teaching and learning. “Our Division of Teaching Excellence and Innovation has organized an integrated, student-level data set and established processes to ensure easy access by researchers to expedite improvement efforts.”

“This project builds on our commitment to providing access to a world-class education to all qualified students regardless of their background,” said Enrique Lavernia, provost and executive vice chancellor. “UCI can serve as a national model for measurement and delivery of undergraduate education and improving student success.”

**About the University of California, Irvine:** Founded in 1965, UCI is the youngest member of the prestigious Association of American Universities. The campus has produced three Nobel laureates and is known for its academic achievement, premier research, innovation and anteater mascot. Led by Chancellor Howard Gillman, UCI has more than 30,000 students and offers 192 degree programs. It’s located in one of the world’s safest and most economically vibrant communities and is Orange County’s second-largest employer, contributing \$5 billion annually to the local economy. For more on UCI, visit [www.uci.edu](http://www.uci.edu).

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