

# CELEBRATING TWO DECADES OF INNOVATION



BY TERRY O'BANION

**G**rowth and innovation were the hallmarks of community colleges during the 1960s. It was a time when educators dreamed and risked in ways they had not for years. The hot ideas included individualizing instruction, management by objectives, the experimental college, encounter groups, humanistic education, and serving new populations.

B. Lamar Johnson chronicled the innovative ideas of the '60s in his books, *Islands of Innovation* followed by *Islands of Innovation Expanding*. A distinguished professor of higher education at the University of California at Los Angeles, Johnson had a vision and invited a number of community college leaders to a conference on "The Experimental Junior College." As a result of that conference, a task force was formed, and on January 26, 1968, 12 community colleges created the League for Innovation in the Community College.

The founding principles of the League were to experiment in teaching, learning, and administration; to exchange the results of that experimentation; and to evaluate those results for dissemination to community colleges nationwide. To achieve these goals, the League embarked on a program of special projects, conferences, workshops, publications, and communication—all designed to stimulate innovation and experimentation in the community college.

Now, 20 years later, the League is a national consortium of 19 community college districts that include 53 public institutions from 14 states and Canada. League colleges enroll more than 850,000 students—one-eighth of all community college students in the United States. The League is the only organization of its kind in the community

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college field and is nationally recognized for the excellent quality of its programs and activities.

As a national organization with members in all sections of the country, the League influences community college development throughout North America. The League is not only committed to programs that contribute to the continuing improvement of member colleges, but it also provides opportunities for other community colleges to participate in its workshops, conferences, projects, and activities.

The League operates under the direction of a 19-member board of directors comprised of the chief executive officer of each member district. A League representative is designated in each district to initiate and coordinate League activities. These activities are funded by membership dues, foundation grants, government contracts, and income from publications, conferences, and workshops.

Membership is by invitation. The current policy of the board is to admit no more than the present number of members. By keeping membership small, the chief executive officers of the League are able to sit around a common table to share ideas and develop innovative projects.

In its 20-year history, the League has provided national leadership for a variety of projects and activities that have helped community colleges try out new ideas and refurbish old ones. These projects have helped community colleges to operate more effi-

ciently, faculty to teach more productively, and students to learn more effectively.

## Information Technology

Beginning in 1971, staff members from League colleges attended a special League/IBM conference on the use of the computer as an aid to instruction. Over the next five years, hundreds of staff members from League colleges attended these seminars, which helped establish League member colleges as among the most advanced community colleges in the use of computers in instruction and institutional management. In 1979 Miami-Dade Community College, Florida, initiated the League project CAMELOT in concert with several League colleges, the new University of Ulster in Northern Ireland, and TV Ontario in Canada. With financial support from League colleges and a grant from the Exxon Education Foundation, CAMELOT was developed and is now recognized as a sophisticated tool for assisting faculty in individualizing their instruction.

Also in 1979, the League received \$250,000 from the Carnegie Corporation of New York to develop the National Community College Productivity Center, which over a three-year period supported 55 projects in League colleges, many of which were related to the application of computers to instruction and institutional management. In 1980, the National Science Foundation awarded the League \$117,000 to develop materials and methods of instruction to train 30 science and social science community college instructors in computer-assisted and -managed instruction.

In 1984 the League published *Guidelines for the Development of Computerized Student Information Systems*, which was distributed at no charge to every community college in North America. During that year, the League also sponsored a national conference on "The Community College and the Computer" in association with a number of national computer and computer-related corporations.

Based on these activities, in 1985 the League launched a five-year project, "The Community College and the Computer." The purpose of the project is to assist the League and community colleges across the nation in learning about and adapting computers to improve student learning and institutional management.

Joining the League in the project is a



selected group of national corporations, including ACT, American Interactive Media, AT&T, Apple Computer, The College Board, Control Data Corporation, Digital Equipment Corporation, Honeywell Bull, IBM, Information Associates, and the Sony Corporation of America. To date, these corporate sponsors have invested \$22 million in development projects with the League and its member colleges. The Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) has granted \$171,375 in support of the management of the project.

*Guidelines for Library and Media Automated Systems* has recently been published as a part of this project, and the guidelines have been adopted by several state systems for implementation. A task force has recently begun to write planning guidelines for instructional computing resources.

Eleven national projects are currently underway, including experiments with interactive video, database development to assist student retention, staff development, computerized adaptive assessment testing, model computer science resource laboratories, and networks. The projects are showcased at an annual conference to acquaint community college staff members with current events in information technology. The next conference will be in Toronto, Canada, in October 1988.

In most of these projects, the League, in conjunction with computer partners, is taking risks to field-test new approaches to improving instruction and institutional management. The results are being shared with community colleges across North America through conferences, reports, and special publications. This project will have great impact on helping community, technical, and junior colleges grasp the potential of information technology as they struggle with some of the toughest tasks facing higher education.

## Leadership Development

Since its beginning, the League has made leadership development one of its major priorities. Special opportunities have been provided for faculty and administrators in League colleges, and in recent years the League has provided opportunities for many non-League members to participate in leadership conferences and workshops.

Each summer the League hosts a summer administrators' conference, which focuses on the development of leaders in League colleges. Every other year, the League hosts a retreat for the chancellors and presidents of League member colleges and the chairs of their boards of trustees.

In 1980 the League launched a major five-year project, funded by a \$330,000 FIPSE grant, to develop women community college administrators. Jointly sponsored by the League and the American Association of Women in Community and Junior Colleges, "Leaders for Change" is now in its eighth year and is self-supporting. More

than 700 women have participated in what many describe as the most significant project in the history of the community college movement in assisting women to move up the administrative ladder.

In 1987, building upon the success of "Leaders for Change," the League Board established The Community College Leadership Institute. The purpose of the Institute is to prepare staff for key leadership positions in community colleges through executive leadership seminars, leadership development seminars, leadership renewal seminars, and cooperative activities with university leadership programs.

The Institute's first program, the executive leadership seminar, is designed to provide an opportunity for potential community college presidents to review their abilities, interests, and skills in an intensive week-long seminar with some of the top community college leaders in the United States and Canada. Participants will be selected on a competitive basis by a national panel of educational leaders. The first seminar will be held June 19-24, 1988, in Newport Beach, California.

In the fall of 1987, the League, in collaboration with the University of Texas at Austin (UT-A), received a \$1,783,750 grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation for a program to prepare community college leaders. During the five-year program, 10 potential leaders will be selected annually to become Kellogg Fellows in the foundation-aided Community College Leadership Program at the UT-A. Five participants will be from League member institutions and five will be from other community colleges. As part of the University program, the Kellogg Fellows will complete a semester-long internship with a chief executive officer of a League college.

In addition to the Kellogg Fellows, the grant supports a number of annual regional and national leadership conferences. A special feature of the program will be a biweekly newsletter, *Leadership Abstracts*, which will provide a forum for significant ideas, innovations, or concerns of community college leaders.

"This grant reaffirms the Kellogg Foundation's long-standing commitment to America's community colleges," said Arlon Elser, a foundation program director. "The development of effective leadership is important to the future of these institutions. Today, more than ever before, cooperative programs such as this are needed to prepare the next generation of community college leaders."

The Kellogg grant will, in part, support the League's new Community College Leadership Institute and a variety of other activities to ensure the continuing development of leaders in community colleges. The League and UT-A are using part of the Kellogg funds to support leadership activities of AACJC's Presidents Academy and selected AACJC councils. All of these activities reflect a renewed interest in leader-

ship development in community colleges across North America.

## International Education

Since 1972 the League has sponsored a series of summer seminars abroad in cooperation with the U.S. Office of Education. These opportunities have enabled more than 100 community college faculty members from League colleges to study in Yugoslavia, Egypt, India, Africa, Jordan, and Mexico.

In early 1980 the League and the National Council for Science and Technology of the Republic of Mexico inaugurated a new program—Mexican/U.S. Technology Transfer. The three-year project allowed 239 Mexican students to enroll in League colleges for specialized technical training.

## Energy and Health

In 1977 the League launched a national project on energy conservation and energy alternatives. Since that time, two resource inventories on energy management and energy education in League institutions have been published. In cooperation with the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory, the League completed a national project to collect data on energy savings in 300 community colleges throughout the United States. In addition, the Department of Energy funded a \$1 million-plus project that trained faculty from 240 community colleges to teach the installation of solar energy systems.

Also in the mid '70s the League provided leadership for another major social issue, the development of self-instructional materials for allied health programs and citizen health consumers. With a grant of more than \$500,000 from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 24 workshops were held for 767 faculty members and individuals who worked in health care. A great many participants were from non-League community colleges. These participants developed 593 self-instructional packages, which were field-tested and peer-reviewed by more than 3,500 participants. More than 330 learning units were distributed to League districts and made available to other community colleges throughout the nation.

The League has been responsible for other programs during the past 20 years, such as special programs and materials for part-time faculty, programs to develop approaches to individualized instruction, efforts to redesign the Harvard Case Study method for use in the community college, programs that integrated women's studies into the curriculum, and projects on personal and family financial planning. These projects are funded by foundation, government, and corporate grants.

## Special Projects

The League has also initiated a number of special projects that are supported only

by resources within the League. One example, the Innovator of the Year Award, is designed to recognize League college staff members who have developed and implemented significant innovations. Each year each member institution selects its "Innovator of the Year," who receives a plaque and is featured in a special issue of the League's newsletter, *Innovator*.

The League Fellows Program is designed to provide quality staff development of institutional leaders and to increase inter-institutional exchange of resources among League member colleges. A League Fellow usually develops a special project, which results in a publication that is shared across the League.

In 1987 the League initiated the first National Community College Art Competition with 79 entries from students in League colleges. Peter Plagens, painter, art critic, and professor of art at Hofstra University, judged the submitted works. The competition is hosted by a League member institution, which prepares a catalog and slide package for use by art faculty.

An exchange program for faculty, administrators, and classified staff is being developed for League member institutions and other selected community colleges. Twenty-three community colleges are participating in the pilot phase, and hundreds of staff members have already signed up for an exchange.

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project on Institutional Effectiveness. The project will result in a monograph on key issues related to determining and improving the effectiveness of community colleges in performing their unique and varied missions. The monograph will be released at a national conference on "Institutional Effectiveness in the Community College" in Charlotte, North Carolina, July 17-20, 1988. The Conference will be co-sponsored by AACJC, The American Association for Higher Education, American College Testing, The College Board, The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, and Educational Testing Service.

### Twenty Years of Innovation

In 1988, as it celebrates two decades of innovation, the League can be proud of its

leadership in community colleges. Since its inception, the League has sponsored 82 conferences, 69 publications, 10 special projects, and 68 projects funded for \$24,136,296. Most of these activities and resources have been shared with other community colleges across North America.

As part of its twentieth anniversary celebration, the League will publish a major monograph featuring the innovations of its member colleges during the last two decades. The monograph will be released during a celebratory reception at the AACJC 68th Annual Convention, April 24-27, 1988 in Las Vegas.

In the coming decade, the League will continue to provide national leadership for innovations in information technology and leadership development. Increasing attention will focus on projects related to teaching and learning and institutional effective-



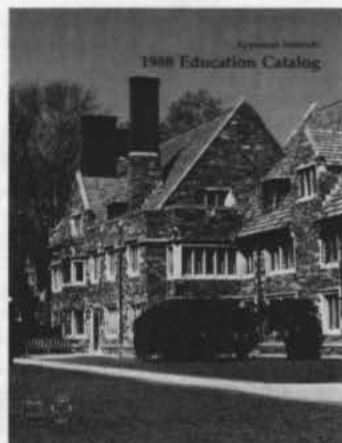
ness. Wherever there is change, wherever cutting-edge technology leads community colleges in the next decade, the League will be there staking out the territory of innovation as its major province.

*Terry O'Banion is executive director of the League for Innovation in the Community College, Laguna Hills, CA.*

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