

Becoming Community Podcast. Season one. Sarah Gewirtz and President Mary Hinton.

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Sarah Gewirtz: Welcome to season one of our podcast series Becoming Community. My name is Sarah Gewirtz and I am the Information Literacy Librarian for Alcuin and Clemens Library and in this series we will talk about how the Mellon grants are helping the CSB/SJU community to be more inclusive. Season one of our series will focus on the first twin Mellon grants which were awarded to CSB and SJU and were administered between 2015 to 2017. During this season we will talk to faculty and staff who have been involved with the Mellon grants to find out what they did, what their next steps might be and what their work means for the CSB/SJU community. In episode 1 I will discuss with College of Saint Benedict's President Dr. Mary Hinton how the CSB/SJU community received a Mellon grant, the goals of the grant, faculty and student response, and the impact it has had on our community. Thank you for joining me this morning President Hinton. I appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule to speak with me. I'll start with asking you why a grant from the Mellon Foundation? Why did you choose that particular foundation over others? Why did you think a Mellon Grant was needed at CSB/SJU?

Mary Hinton: Well it was really a confluence of a couple of things. So people have heard me share this story before -- it was actually at my first month as the president at Saint Ben's that I was reading The Chronicle of Higher Education then they've done a feature piece on Earl Lewis the president who was the president of the Mellon Foundation at that time and it was a really compelling piece and it spoke about his commitment to inclusion and equity in higher education. As I mentioned I was brand new to the job and had been so impressed looking at the ways Saint Ben's and Saint John's had embraced diversity over the past decade or so and in fact they've seen a quadrupling in the numbers of American students of color over those ten years. As President I thought he should know about Saint Ben's and Saint John's and so I sent him a letter saying I would love to introduce you to the college and interestingly he replied and said well when you're in New York come by and see me. And so that was the first step and I wanted to share with him what we were doing to promote the liberal arts. The other part that I wanted to share with him was our Benedictine value of living in community -- that it's not just about the education you receive it's about how we gather together and to really talk through with him some of the gaps we were seeing in that community perception. So those pieces were there and I was having this conversation with Earl, and back on campus Tom Sibley at an open forum mentioned that he would like us to find support to help faculty better advise, support, teach -- have more inclusive pedagogy in the classroom and so I felt like I had some internal support for this conversation as well: Tom placed a request can you provide us with the support that we need. So those pieces came together and after some ongoing conversation (it wasn't just one meeting and you get a grant; you build a relationship) and this was the foundation of that relationship. They had the leadership in place that was interested in it and that's what led to the first iteration of the Mellon grants. So I should actually pause there and thank Jean Keller who focused on the first-year seminar I'm sorry Jean Keller focused on the humanities cohort and Kyhl Lyndgaard focused on the first year seminar cohort and they did an excellent job leading this. So

there were for the humanities which is the ones St. Ben's was working on there were 21 members in that cohort who partnered with the members who were part of the FYS program. What the faculty within the humanities emphasized were a number of professional development activities so they did panels and workshops; they had reading groups and some campus-wide events; and they prioritized the development of inclusive pedagogy, inclusive advising and teaching for inclusion as part of that work within the humanities and they also did a personal reflection piece as well. Similar activities were carried out in the first-year seminar and we're seeing some of that play out through the some of the first-year experience things that we're seeing take place this year. But the cohorts work together so the humanities cohort was 21 and faculty became peer resources to one another. So because the grants were focused on humanities and first year seminar we had to figure out how do we then take this to faculty in the Natural Sciences to faculty in social sciences and so that was an intentional piece of the peer resource.

Sarah Gewirtz: How did this words change how faculty approached their teaching and their students? What feedback did you get from faculty?

Mary Hinton: One of the parts of the grant was doing some assessment -- so how did we move forward over faculty that I think it would be important to share. We surveyed how prepared faculty felt in working with -- whether it's thinking about pedagogy or advising -- working with students, American students of color and we saw an increase of 12 percentage points in terms of Faculty's survey pre and post the grant. So the work around inclusive pedagogy and inclusive advising and how we do this work really did pay off. That's a pretty significant increase over the over the life of the grant, keeping in mind that the grant wasn't multiple years. There was a defined period of time. So we saw that increase, and we saw a similar increase in the percentage of faculty who reported that racial and ethnic diversity in the classroom is important. And again that increased to 51 percent of faculty saying that that diversity in the classroom is important. That data matters because that data enables us to go out and pursue other grants. So we were able to not only say this grant mattered and it impacted faculty or impacted what we do in the classroom, but we were actually able to demonstrate through data that it that it mattered. I think it mattered in some other ways as well in terms of what faculty are doing. So they're actually living in to the goals of the grant. So we see it in terms of the theater department use sort of the some of the ideas generated and the energy around inclusion to invite Lou Bellamy who's the former Penumbra theater director to come and have a residency on campus. That engaged more diverse students in the theater department and that was a big deal. It helps inform the development of an advising syllabus or faculty advising and training. I think it helped influence our first year experience. It provided a common read for the honors first year seminar sections. So there's the data growth that we saw. There's also the ways in sort of help me live together.

Sarah Gewirtz: So when you mention inclusive pedagogy would you say then what the faculty was doing, as you just explained, would be how you define it?

Mary Hinton: I think inclusive pedagogy includes lots of different pieces but certainly thinking about how do we extend what we're doing within and outside of the classroom. I want to be really clear that it's not just a classroom based opportunity. How do we extend what we're doing to ensure all students have an entry point? So that's part of what was so compelling about that the Theatre department's work with Lou Bellamy is that it intentionally reached out and brought more and more diverse students into the theater department and into the Fine Arts dimension of our campus. And that was an intentional purposeful effort led by Kaarin and others. And so inclusive pedagogy is really about helping every student every student see themselves in that classroom and in what's being learned and really having the best possible experience.

Sarah Gewirtz: How did this work affect our students of color and what feedback have you heard from our students?

Mary Hinton: So in the same way that we did some assessment of faculty growth and responses we did the same thing with a group of students who participated and at the end of the grant 100 percent of the students of color surveyed reported having someone they felt they could reach out to for support on campus. And of course you want that for every single student on our campus and so we were delighted with that. Even more and this was pretty remarkable the number of students of color who believe that faculty are more open to diverse points of view in class increased by 25% over the course of the Mellon grant period. So it's that growth that you're really looking for and that gives you the energy and the impetus to continue doing the work. It would be disingenuous though to just report sort of that side of it. We know from those same surveys that students of color report feeling two times more likely to have fear for personal physical safety, to hear derogatory verbal remarks, and so forth. So there is still work to be done. I am super proud of the growth that the Mellon grant spurred but there's still work that needs to be done. And I think we have the capacity, the interest, and are developing even more resources to do more.

Sarah Gewirtz: Yeah I think when you hear the numbers it is amazing in such a short period of time how much of an impact Mellon grants did, did not only have on the faculty but also on students themselves.

Mary Hinton: I would just add I think it also had a significant impact on the faculty, the students, but the way the faculty reached out to the community as a whole meant that other staff and administrators could also engage even though the grant wasn't directly for them. It gave them an opportunity to engage with this.

Sarah Gewirtz: What did you learn from the Mellon grant?

Mary Hinton: My big takeaway from Mellon is that it has to be so much more than increasing the number of programs for students -- that it really is about how do we think about helping our professional community on campus, faculty, staff, administrators, think about wrestle with and interest these issues as well. And that really has been what has spurred the subsequent work with Mellon is it's not student focused first per se -- of course they're the ultimate beneficiaries, they're the reason why we're

here -- but it really is what do we need to do on campus to create an environment in which students can thrive. and what I took away primarily from the Mellon Grant is that that's work for us to do and students will benefit. We continue to have incredible student programming but we need an equal amount of programming for all of us.

Sarah Gewirtz: President Hinton, as we move forward I read that you would like to see the campus move from individual change to institutional change and from new techniques to profound sustained self understanding. How do you see that happening, and what can those who do not teach but work with students do to help make this change possible?

Mary Hinton: Well -- I think there are a couple of parts to that question-- one is with those who don't teach how can they help make this change possible. The campus community relies on everyone. Certainly the academic enterprise is the heart of the campus, so the work with faculty is critically important but students exist outside of the classroom as well. So we all have a part in this work and that goes back to my earlier comment about making sure that we're working with the professional community on campus. In terms of moving from individual change to institutional change, it's really moving beyond how an individual feels to how our institutions behave. So how do we think about how we as institutions want to be in the world as it relates to inclusion, what's our mission commitment, what's our mission call to that. How do we think about how we prepare our students to go out and live in a very dynamic and diverse world? How do we remain relevant in a changing market? That is in part about changing hearts and minds, yes, but it's also about how we behave as an institution as a whole and it's from just programming -- let me put these programs in place that you can go to -- to really thinking about what does it mean to be a Catholic Benedictine residential liberal arts institution. So if you look at any of the research there's the first level change which is the heart and mind and cultural competency work, and then the second level change which is really at the institutional institution.

Sarah Gewirtz: I read over the article Saint John's president Hemesath wrote in *Headwaters* which was published this past spring that discusses the Mellon grant. In at you mention inclusion ecosystem. What does that mean and how do you think we are getting closer to creating one?

Mary Hinton: What I think is important and clarify that inclusion means everyone. It means all of us, so everyone. And so when we think about an inclusion ecosystem we think about inclusion on multiple dimensions. Certainly we think about it in terms of race ethnicity, but there's economic diversity, geographic diversity, religious diversity, diversity of abilities, sexual orientation, and gender identity perspective and thought. So we have to think about inclusion across multiple dimensions when you think about an ecosystem. But an ecosystem acknowledges that we need to make headway in a number of different areas. It's not just one area on campus -- this isn't just the faculty's work, it's not just student development work, it's the work of the entire campus ecosystem. So we think about an inclusion ecosystem and it has impacts on multiple areas: the curricular curriculum and the co-curriculum so certainly the things of students experience; the professional development of all of the

members in our campus community; how we partner with others in our community --so what are the implications for inclusion for our monastic partners on campus, what are the implications for a relationship with the communities in which we reside -- with local businesses or with big businesses, with Saint Joe or with Saint Cloud, so how do we partner broadly? And then the fourth area where you think about an ecosystem is around policies, programs, and practices. So what are the ways that we aren't inclusive, how do we name that not in a punitive or punishing kind of way, but how do we name it and get better at our policies programs and practices to become a more inclusive institution.

Sarah Gewirtz: Going forward, what advice would you give the entire CSB/SJU community? What can our community continue to do and start trying to do as we move forward?

Mary Hinton: I give one reminder and one invitation. So a reminder to the community is that inclusion is not it's not a goal or end point. It's not a destination of a journey. I think it's the way we engage in the journey with each other -- this is ongoing work, and it's work that will evolve over time but it's an ongoing process. And the invitation is to say come and engage in the work. The Becoming Community programs or Mellon 2.0 as some call it, has organized a number of professional development opportunities. They've been very transparent about what the opportunities are and how you can engage. You can do a one-off, you can become certified, you can become an advanced practitioner, so there are lots of ways to engage and to leverage the wisdom and knowledge on our campus. And so the invitation is to people to engage in this next version of it, to bring forward their ideas, their hopes, their concerns and to really help us create a campus where we can talk about and surface these issues and engage in this journey.

Sarah Gewirtz: Do you have any book recommendations for our listening audience to help them work towards inclusivity for everyone?

Mary Hinton: so next week on campus we will have Amy Reynolds, who is one of the co-authors of *Creating Multicultural Change On Campus*. Becoming Community has offered free copies of the book, I know many many many people have accepted those copies so I would really recommend and our St. Ben's cabinet read and debriefed yesterday, *Creating Multicultural Change On Campus*, so I strongly recommend that folks read that and if they have an opportunity to attend one of a Amy Reynolds presentations next week. There's another that I've been harping on now for a few months so no one will be surprised, this was another cabinet read that we did called *Becoming a Student Ready College* and it really talks about best practices to serve all students and what does it mean to be a student ready college. Tia McNear is one of the authors on that book and she was on campus this past summer. There's another book that I find more complicated but interesting, and the premise isn't -- well the reader will decide for themselves that their relationship with it -- but it's called *Bandwidth Recovery* about how campuses can help students who've been compromised due to other events in their lives succeed on campus. So it's an interesting idea.

Sarah Gewirtz: There's a book club here we have on campus for it.

Mary Hinton: I bet you'll get lots of different perspectives. Even as I read it I had conflicting perspectives about it. So those are some things to read.

Sarah Gewirtz: Again I would like to thank President Dr. Mary Hinton for taking time out of her busy schedule to participate in the Becoming Community podcast. To find the article mentioned in episode one by President Hinton and President Hemesath entitled "An introduction to the Mellon Grant," *Headwaters* volume 30 pages 60-63 2017. visit digital commons dot CSB SJU dot edu. Thank you to the Becoming Community team Amanda Macht Jantzer, Brandon Woodard, and Anna Mercedes for their support. A special thanks to Cindy Gonzalez for her support and help, and to Jacob Jantzer for his editing skills. Podcast recording was done on October 11th 2018 at Saint John's University Alcuin Library.

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