

The Wright Questions

[Teagle Cornerstone Implementation Grant Proposal](#)

Wright State University College of Liberal Arts

### **Introduction: Enhancing General Education at Wright State University:**

The current general education course offerings in CoLA lack coordination and alignment with the institutional context and student needs. Students often approach courses in the arts, humanities, and social sciences as mere requirements that they need to check off a list rather than an opportunity to expand their intellectual and professional range of skills by exploring topics that speak to their passions, identities, and career aspirations. To address this, “The Wright Questions” program will empower students to explore big questions related to their career paths. By intentionally linking liberal arts courses to real-world challenges, we aim to foster meaningful engagement and encourage students to take ownership of their educational journey. The four pathways described below have been designed with careful consideration of the most heavily populated majors at Wright State University, which include computer science, mechanical engineering, nursing, psychology, and biology. We have also taken into consideration the significant presence of active and former military on our campus, which is located adjacent to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.

The four central themes of “The Wright Questions” are as follows:

#### **Wright Question #1: Can Humans Live in Harmony with Nature?**

Human beings share the planet with millions of other species, as well as with one another. Our decisions locally affect living and non-living entities throughout the world, thus our neighbors are both local and global. Since we are so interdependent with our environment and our human neighbors, we must find ways to live peacefully together, to avoid exploitation of others, and to co-exist with nature. This pathway will pair issues of environmental sustainability with questions of intercultural understanding and global cooperation.

#### **Wright Question #2: Are Humans Different from Machines?**

How are humans different from machines and animals? How are they the same? Various cultural and thought traditions attribute qualities to human beings that make them unique from machines and animals, e.g. they are made in the image of God, have souls, use language, exercise reason, etc. How do these ideas hold up in light of such developments as Artificial Intelligence and Animal Rights? Can there be life without physical bodies? How do notions of humanity intersect with race, gender, class, and sexuality?

#### **Wright Question #3: What Is a Healthy and Good Life?**

“Mens sana in corpore sano” is a Latin phrase meaning “a healthy mind in a healthy body.” But what does it mean to be healthy? And are we really minds that inhabit bodies or are the two overlapping and interconnected? And can we be healthy if the world we live in is not healthy? How is purpose and meaning relate to health and happiness? What are the relative values of strength, excitement, and change to security and stability? Why do people sometimes do dangerous things?

#### **Wright Question #4: What Explains War, Violence, and Injustice---and What Can Stop It?**

Analyzing historical and contemporary conflicts and problem solving, should we accept war as an inevitable aspect of the human condition or is it possible to imagine a world beyond war? Is there ever a justification for war? If wars must be conducted, is there an ethical way for this to happen? What is the

relationship between violence and injustice? How can we effect meaningful change with non-violent practices? Will violence disappear in a perfectly just society?

We will create a certificate program within “The Wright Questions” that students can earn by their sophomore year. In addition, the four Wright Questions will serve as the framework for an essay/scholarship competition that will be a culminating activity for the program. Students will submit essays, podcasts, or videos that respond to one of the four “Wright Questions,” with first, second, and third place winners being assigned in each area. Students will be acknowledged in an awards ceremony and showcase, and if they choose to complete an applied humanities minor (or second major in the humanities) to supplement their pre-professional major, will be given a scholarship.

In order to facilitate the creation of the Wright Questions program and thus transform CoLA’s general education offering, we will apply for a grant from the Teagle Foundation Cornerstone: Learning for Living Program to receive funds up to \$300,000 for a two-year period. These funds would support curriculum development, course materials, marketing, advising, peer mentors, and professional development for faculty to effectively teach interdisciplinary paired course groupings as part of the pathways. Whether or not we receive this grant, CoLA intends to develop and offer this program. Given this fact, we respectfully request the following from the Board of Trustees:

**A statement of support for the development of the program that we can submit as part of our Teagle Grant application package, which is due on December 1, 2024.**