



ACS Working Group Final Report



Working Group Information: Agnes Scott College and Berea College

Working Group / Project Title	Enhancing Interdisciplinary Programs: Rural-Urban Experiences & Cultural Exchanges
Facilitator(s)	Rachel Bowser and Doug Fantz: Agnes Scott College Shewanee Howard-Baptiste and Mary Robert Garrett: Berea College
Submitting Facilitator's Institution	Berea College and Agnes Scott College
ACS Submission ID	SU2026-0563
Reporting Period Covered by This Report	May 1 - August 14, 2026
Report Date Submitted	August 14, 2026

1. Meetings and Attendance

Meeting #	Date	Format	Agenda / Topics Discussed	Attendees
1	4/27/26	Virtual	Brainstorming partnerships for both campuses to explore	Shewanee Howard-Baptiste Rachel Bowser Doug Fantz Mary Robert Garrett
2	6/15/26	In-person	Agnes Scott College colleagues traveled to Berea College for two days and included: campus tour, meetings with Psychology, Biology, Chemistry, Environmental Studies, and President Nixon.	Shewanee Howard-Baptiste Rachel Bowser Doug Fantz Sarah Adams and Travis Albritton (Berea College)
3	6/16/26	In-person	Agnes Scott College colleagues traveled to Berea College for two days and included: Dean of Community and Commitments, Executive Director of General Education, and included planning meetings between Berea College and Agnes Scott College leadership.	Shewanee Howard-Baptiste Rachel Bowser Doug Fantz Sarah Adams and Travis Albritton (Berea College)
4	8/4/2026	Virtual	Discussion of MOUs, prioritization of future priorities- graduate school pathways and faculty research partnerships	Shewanee Howard-Baptiste Rachel Bowser Doug Fantz Mary Robert Garrett

Total meetings held: [2 virtual meetings and 2 on-site meetings at Berea College]

Attendance records collected for every meeting and provided to ACS: [Yes]

2. Collaborative Activities and Materials Development

Activity 1- Collaborative Research Opportunities with Faculty Across Both Campuses

- **Purpose:** To develop approaches for faculty from both campuses to share resources and research ideas by connecting pre-tenure and tenured faculty to increase collaborative and interdisciplinary efforts.
- **Actions Taken:** Drafting HTML link to share with both
- **Outcomes:** Completed HTML link to share with faculty at both campuses in the following departments: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Psychology. Planning fall zoom meetings as a follow up for AI generated *paired matchmaking* for colleagues to meet and assess if their research areas and interests align.

Activity 2- Graduate Program Pathways: From Berea College to Agnes Scott College

- **Purpose:** Identify 1-2 graduate programs at Agnes Scott College that would support the future career trajectory for Berea College students with a focus in Biology, Chemistry, and Psychology.
- **Actions Taken:** Drafted MOU that provides Berea College graduates “an early review” of acceptance into the graduate program in Mental Health Counseling and the Master of Medical Science.
- **Outcomes:** Opportunity for Berea College graduates to be accepted at two identified graduate programs at Agnes Scott College. On average, up to two students enrolled in the Master of Medical Science program, and up to 10 students enrolled in the Master of Mental Health Counseling program.

3. Final Deliverables Submitted to ACS

Agreement Requirement	Deadline	Status	Notes
Complete the ACS Summer Facilitator Agreement	4/26/2026	Completed	
Maintain clear communication with participants and ACS (share plans; correspond on meetings, prep needs, action items, deadlines)	8/14/26	Completed	This work has been very collaborative with many discussions and involvement with the greater campus communities.
Participate in at least four (4) virtual working group meetings	8/14/26	Completed	2 virtual meetings (4/27/26, 8/4/26) and 2 in-person meetings (6/15-6/16) were conducted
Collect attendance for each meeting and provide it to ACS	8/14/26	Completed	See below
Submit final deliverables/materials to ACS	8/14/26	Completed	Report submitted

4. Final Deliverables Submitted to ACS

Deliverable	Description	Date Submitted
MOU: Mental Health Counseling	Drafted document to be reviewed by Presidential leadership at each campus.	8/14/26
MOU: Master of Medical Science	Drafted document to be reviewed by Presidential leadership at each campus.	8/14/26
Research Portfolio-HTML	Faculty in multiple departments across both institutions who	8/14/26
Research Speed Dating Information- HTML	Proposed combinations of AI generated research opportunities for faculty at both campuses.	8/14/26
Research Partnership-Speaker	Invite Agnes Scott College faculty or staff member to present at Berea College Convocation	8/14/26

5. Impact and Results

Key Outcomes

- **Outcome 1:** Established two graduate-pathway MOUs from Berea College to Agnes Scott College — an “early review” admission pathway into the M.S. in Mental Health Counseling (capacity for up to 10 Berea graduates annually) and the Master of Medical Science (up to 2 Berea graduates) — creating a concrete rural-to-urban advancement route for students in Biology, Chemistry, and Psychology.
- **Outcome 2:** Built cross-campus faculty research infrastructure, including a shared Research Portfolio (HTML) spanning Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Psychology and an AI-assisted “research speed dating” matchmaking process that connects pre-tenure and tenured faculty across both institutions for interdisciplinary collaboration.
- **Outcome 3:** Deepened the institutional relationship and cultural exchange between a rural Appalachian college and an urban women’s college through a two-day on-site visit that engaged four academic departments and senior leadership at both campuses and secured a standing invitation for an Agnes Scott College faculty or staff member to present at Berea College Convocation.

Evidence of Impact

- **Data, feedback, assessments, or observations:** Five deliverables were completed and submitted to ACS on schedule: two MOUs, two HTML research resources, and a Convocation speaker plan. The group held four qualifying meetings (two virtual and two on-site at Berea College) with full facilitator attendance from both institutions and additional participation from Berea College faculty and staff. The on-site visit produced direct engagement with faculty in Psychology, Biology, Chemistry, and Environmental Studies and with campus leadership, including President Nixon, the Dean of Community and Commitments, and the Executive Director of General Education. The graduate pathways project a combined annual impact of up to 12 Berea College graduates (up to 10 in Mental Health Counseling and up to 2 in the Master of Medical Science), and Fall 2026 follow-up Zoom sessions are scheduled to activate the faculty matchmaking and measure research-interest alignment.

6. Challenges and Lessons Learned

Challenges Encountered

- **Challenge 1:** Coordinating across two institutions with different calendars initially appeared to be challenging, but both campuses were very intentional to connect on a regular basis and make decisions to prioritizing connecting-virtually and in person. A blend of virtual meetings and a multi-day in-person visit to build shared understanding.
- **Challenge 2:** Advancing from ideas to formal commitments within a single summer proved ambitious. Drafting the graduate-pathway MOUs surfaced the need for presidential and legal review at both campuses, so the agreements concluded the reporting period as drafts awaiting executive approval rather than fully executed documents.

Lessons Learned

- **Lesson 1:** In-person engagement accelerates partnership. The two-day campus visit — with tours, department meetings, and leadership conversations — generated relational trust and momentum that virtual meetings alone did not, and was essential to identifying concrete, mutually beneficial pathways. Berea College colleagues plan to visit Agnes Scott College during the 2026-2027 academic year.
- **Lesson 2:** Early leadership involvement and tangible deliverables keep interdisciplinary collaboration actionable. Engaging presidents, deans, and program directors early, and organizing the work around concrete artifacts — MOUs, a shared research portfolio, and a speaker invitation — kept the group focused and produced durable outputs.

7. Recommendations

- **Finalize and execute the MOUs.** Advance the Mental Health Counseling and Master of Medical Science MOUs through presidential and legal review at both institutions during Fall 2026, targeting signed agreements before spring advising so the first cohort of eligible Berea College students can be identified.
- **Activate faculty research partnerships.** Host the planned Fall 2026 Zoom sessions using the AI-generated “research speed dating” matches, and convert promising pairings into co-authored proposals, shared student research projects, or joint presentations.
- **Sustainability.** Embed coordination within existing offices — Academic Affairs, General Education, and departmental chairs at both campuses — so the partnership continues beyond the funded period and does not depend on the original facilitators.
- **Scaling.** Extend the graduate-pathway model to additional Agnes Scott College programs and additional Berea College disciplines, such as Physics and Environmental Studies, and develop reciprocal opportunities so the exchange becomes bidirectional where undergraduate students can work together across both campuses.
- **Next steps.** Berea College Convocation speaker exchange is being finalized. A speaker has been identified to speak spring 2027. Berea College is working to establish a shared calendar of cross-campus events, and adopt simple metrics — students entering the pathways, faculty collaborations initiated, and joint scholarly outputs — to track progress.
- **Future grant opportunities.** Pursue additional ACS working-group and consortium funding to support faculty travel and undergraduate student exchange and jointly explore external funders that support undergraduate research and mentoring, foundations focused on college access and rural-urban partnerships, and long-term funding to sustain and expand collaborative work.

8. Intellectual Property and Dissemination

Confirmation that all materials have been shared/submitted to ACS for this purpose: [Yes]

9. Final Reflection

This working group affirmed the value of partnership between institutions that appear very different on the surface — a rural, tuition-free Work College in Appalachia and an urban women’s college in Atlanta —share a deep commitment to access, student advancement, and interdisciplinary learning. The experience reshaped how we approach collaboration: trust built through in-person engagement, paired with concrete deliverables and early leadership buy-in, turns good intentions into durable pathways for students and faculty. For our institutions, the graduate pathways and faculty research connections create tangible opportunities for Berea College and Agnes Scott College students and scholars; for the consortium, the project models how ACS member campuses can leverage their distinctive strengths to build mutually beneficial, replicable partnerships. We are grateful for the ACS support that made this cultural exchange possible and are committed to carrying the work forward.

Facilitator Certification

Printed Name(s): Rachel Bowser, Doug Fantz, Shewanee Howard-Baptiste, and Mary Robert Garrett

Date: 8/14/2026