

TITLE: OLIN COLLEGE: IT'S ALIVE

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INTRODUCTION

Over the last twenty years, the National Science Foundation and the engineering community have called for systemic changes in engineering education, including a shift from disciplinary thinking to interdisciplinary approaches, increased development of communication and teaming skills, and emphasis on engineering practice and design throughout the curriculum. In 1997, the F.W. Olin Foundation of New York responded to the calls for reform in engineering education by making a commitment in excess of \$300 million to establish Franklin W. Olin College of Engineering, an entirely new and independent undergraduate institution dedicated to preparing technological leaders for the next century. By starting with a “blank slate,” the F.W. Olin Foundation hoped to accelerate implementation of curricular reforms.

Olin is currently developing and implementing an innovative curriculum that combines best practices from many other institutions with new, pedagogically sound ideas and approaches. In addition, the Olin community is establishing an exciting college environment that obscures the conventional boundaries between curricular and non-curricular aspects of college life. Olin college is student-centered, focused on the growth of the entire person, and driven by innovation and continual improvement.

In this session, we will share life at Olin including what we're doing, what's working, and the challenges we're facing. Along the way, we will offer suggestions of potentially transferable curricular, co-curricular, and student life components that may benefit other institutions. Using student artifacts created during Olin's first year, we will paint a picture that shows Olin's approaches to faculty teaming, integrated course blocks, project-centered learning, and multidisciplinary education. We will describe Olin's emphasis on arts, humanities, design, and creativity through our curricular components, co-curricular activities, and passionate pursuits program. We will introduce Olin's assessment and feedback mechanisms, student learning plans, and advising family system. Our goal is to share the first few chapters of our Olin story in a way that will be both interesting and useful for educators from other institutions.

We will run this session as a continual block. Presentations, discussions, and question/answer periods will be interspersed throughout the block. We expect the audience to consist of educators, primarily in the fields of

science and engineering; however, our emphasis on integrating arts, humanities, entrepreneurship, and social sciences may attract educators from other fields. Our expectations for this session include disseminating information, offering exportable suggestions, and soliciting feedback and ideas from the audience. We hope that this session will serve as a first step toward Olin's goal of sharing our experiences in a way that benefits other institutions.

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