



June 30, 2011

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **West Liberty University and Appalachian Education Initiative Partner on New Center**

#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

MORGANTOWN WV - West Liberty University and the Appalachian Education Initiative (AEI) are pleased to announce a new partnership which will result in the creation of an arts and education center on the WLU main campus. The Center will be a collaboration between AEI and the Colleges of Education and Arts and Communication at the University.

The Center will provide programs, resources and services for artists, educators, WLU students, and others and focus on the arts, education, and the integration of the disciplines. Funding for the Center and the partnership has been provided through a \$166,000 grant to West Liberty University from the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation.

"We are pleased to have the opportunity to partner with West Liberty University," said AEI Executive Director Lou Karas. "This collaboration will not only provide both AEI and West Liberty University with access to new resources, it will also provide opportunities to expand programs and services to support the arts and arts education in West Virginia schools."

Dr. Keely Camden, Dean for the College of Education, and Dr. Bill Baronak, Dean for the College of Arts and Communication at WLU, co-authors with Karas on the grant, are working to involve faculty, staff, students, and the community in this collaborative effort.

"We are privileged to be working with Lou Karas and AEI and are most grateful to the Benedum Foundation for their support of this collaboration and center," said Camden. Many of our faculty, staff, and students are already actively engaged in the planning process, and they are very excited for future projects, grants, and professional development," said Baronak.

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The College of Arts and Communication houses programs in Art Education, Music Education, Theater, Digital Media Design, Graphic Design, Broadcasting, Communication Studies, Sports Broadcasting, and Documentary Films. The College of Arts and Communication partners closely with the College of Education on Music and Art Education certification programs. A new proposal for Theater Education with teacher certification is being written for state approval.

AEI will move its office from Morgantown to the WLU campus this summer. The organization will continue its statewide work, including its relationships with the Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network and VSA, the international organization for the arts and disabilities from its new location.

Planning for the new Center is already underway and will continue through the summer and fall. For more information about the new partnership, contact Karas at [lkaras@aeiarts.org](mailto:lkaras@aeiarts.org) or 304-225-0101.

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