APA Grant Report - Iowa Lyceum 2022

Introduction
We would like to once again thank the APA for your generous support in helping to fund the 2022 Iowa Lyceum Program. Here we report on our efforts, outcomes, assessment results, budget utilization, and adjustments we will make going forward. In our grant application, we outlined several goals for the 2022 Iowa Lyceum program. In light of the global pandemic, we found that there is interest in participating not only in the Iowa City community, but nationally and internationally. To capitalize on the broad interest and name recognition the Iowa Lyceum currently enjoys, we had hoped to craft a hybrid program that would incorporate the classical in-person instruction that is characteristic of the Lyceum program, while allowing students from outside the Iowa City area to join remotely through zoom. Our goal was to recruit 15 students from local schools for the face-to-face program (to be held on the campus of the University of Iowa), and to recruit 25 students from around the country - though we planned to target schools in western Iowa in particular.

To achieve these goals, we planned an aggressive marketing campaign incorporating social media, targeted email listserv communication (including High-School Ethics Bowl coaches, teachers) partnership with PLATO, a post on Daily Nous, and outreach to other national pre-college philosophy programs.

We planned to assess the efficacy of the program both formatively and summatively. We planned formative assessments at various points in the process: at the application deadline (to determine the viability of a hybrid program), after each day’s meeting (to assess engagement and determine what adjustments needed to be made), and after the program’s completion (to review and discuss any responses to a participant survey).

In what follows we outline to what extent we were able to meet our goals, the results of our formative and summative assessments, the ways in which we can improve the program in the future based on our assessment, and finally how the APA Small Grant funds were utilized.

Results
We began planning the Lyceum program in January, and met regularly to develop curriculum, organize communication, and ensure that all organizers involved had background checks and minors on campus training in place. The planning sessions occurred regularly between January and our May 20 application deadline. As outlined in the application, we pursued an aggressive advertising campaign, which we expanded to include reaching out to additional precollege philosophy programs. To our surprise, we had limited success this year in recruiting students this year. Following the application deadline, we were disappointed to find we had only 8 participants (out of 12 accepted applications), well below our goal of 40. The diverse demographics of the
participants who did enroll were encouraging, with 100% of participants identifying as a woman, 40% identifying as LGBTQIA+, and half of participants identified as either Asian or Hispanic, so our reach once again proved substantial. In addition to drawing a handful of local students, our outreach to other precollege philosophy programs resulted in participants from Utah, California, New York, Texas, and Hong Kong. Given the small number of participants paired with the national reach of our program, we made the decision to abandon the hybrid model for this year and host the Lyceum remotely once again.

While we were disappointed by the small number of participants, we believe that there were unique factors that resulted in our lower enrollment. The summer of 2022 marked a fundamental shift in the popular consciousness regarding Covid. Given the availability of the covid vaccine, the virtual prohibition on travel for the previous two years, and the proliferation of in-person programs available again for the first time in years, we faced a virtual “perfect storm” of challenges to recruiting for our program. Ours was not the only program to face such challenges. For example, our sister program the Utah Lyceum had to cancel their program due to low enrollments. Their director, Dr. Kristopher Phillips, reported to us that they had received feedback from parents that the availability and relative increased safety of travel (both nationally and internationally) contributed to students’ decision not to enroll.

As a result of this shift to online and a smaller group of participants than expected, we used this opportunity to really focus on training and development of student organizers. This year’s Lyceum had the highest number of graduate student organizers in the 10 years that the Lyceum has been running—with the entire first-year University of Iowa philosophy PhD cohort being involved in the organizing process. This year was also the first year that we recruited an undergraduate student organizer—a University of Iowa philosophy major. The high number of organizers meant additional opportunities for participants to explore different areas of philosophy, as there was greater diversity of interests represented by student organizers. We focused more effort on training each organizer on the various aspects of the Lyceum so each person was aware of the logistical considerations for running a Lyceum program, as well as had multiple opportunities for organizers to practice developing and presenting Lyceum lessons in front of their peers to receive constructive feedback.

**Assessment**

While we were discouraged by the enrollment, reflection on the unique factors that we believe impacted enrollment served to mitigate some of our concern. We maintain that as the world returns to some sense of normalcy, we will see an uptick in participation.

As planned, we met after each day to review the curriculum, instruction, and relative participation from the online students. We found that while our participants were present each day, encouraging them to engage consistently proved something of a challenge. We adjusted
some of the activities we had planned to try to encourage more dialogue - as is in line with our pedagogical approach - but found that the participants seemed to struggle with engagement despite our best efforts. What was somewhat surprising was that while we could not get all of the students to engage at the same time, some participants would engage one day, but check out the next. We offer the following two possible explanatory hypotheses. First, given the demographics of the group, we believe that zoom fatigue may have played a large role in engagement patterns (consider this study from Stanford University). While our program is only five days, coming on the heels of two years of remote instruction, and the relative youth of the participants, zoom fatigue may well have had an outsized influence on their participation. Alternatively, it may be the case that some of the instructors in the organizational team appealed more to some students than others. Of course, these are not mutually exclusive explanations, and they are not exhaustive either. Again, we hope that as students return to in-person instruction and the world returns to some sense of normal, the impact of zoom fatigue will be diminished, and students will find an online program such as ours more appealing.

Shockingly, we did not receive any formal responses following the conclusion of the Lyceum. As a result, any summative assessment must be limited to our own reflections. One adjustment we will make in future years is to build time into the curriculum for participants to fill out our survey. That is a simple change that will have a substantial impact on our ability to assess the program. As noted above, we were disappointed by the diminished turnout as well as by the limited engagement from our participants. Making the decision to host the Lyceum program remotely was certainly the correct decision given the small number of students and their remote locations. We are optimistic, however, that we have built the infrastructure necessary to successfully execute our planned expansion in future years. We believe in the Lyceum program, and its ten years of successful programs is a testament to its draw and efficacy. We believe that this year was an anomaly, given the extraordinary circumstances of the past several years.

We will maintain our aggressive advertising and recruiting strategies by keeping our listservs up to date, will maintain friendly and supportive relationships with existing precollege philosophy programs, and will continue to begin our planning process in January (which includes required readings on the theory and practice of the program - in order to ensure consistency). We also plan to expand our recruiting efforts by visiting high-school classrooms and chatting with students directly. We believe that the personal touch will help to build a rapport with local students.

Furthermore, given the expansion in the number of student organizers this year, we are optimistic regarding the future of the Lyceum and pre-college philosophy. One of the primary obstacles to greater involvement in pre-college philosophy is drumming up interest and experience in pre-college settings, so inspiring and developing new generations of graduate students who are capable of executing a pre-college philosophy program like the Lyceum is an important long-term part of increasing the reach of pre-college philosophy. For comparison, in 2020 the
Lyceum had only three graduate student organizers. The 2021 Lyceum added only two new organizers. This year, though, brought four new organizers into the Lyceum. In this regard, we feel the 2022 Lyceum exceeded our expectations.

**Budget Utilization**

The submitted budget included anticipated funds from a number of sources. Due to a clerical error, we did not receive all of the funds we had hoped for. The funds we received from the APA grant amounted to $2500. Of the $2500, we spent $1000 on books, t-shirts, and shipping for the participants. We purchased *The Good Life Method* by Meghan Sullivan and Paul Blaschko as well as Marcus Aurelius’ *Meditations* and made custom shirts for all participants. The remaining $1500 served as honoraria for the Lyceum student organizers. In total, there were seven organizers, each of whom received a modest honorarium of about $215. Each organizer put in about 56 hours of work in planning and executing the Lyceum.

Additional funds (from the University of Iowa College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and from the Department of Philosophy) were utilized to pay for background checks for all organizers and instructors, the Lyceum’s affiliation with PLATO, and other affiliated costs.