R.Borasi – last updated 11/11/11

Evaluation of the opportunity to start an Horizon Summer Program at Warner *(Raffaella Borasi)*

Brief description of the proposed initiative:

Horizons summer program:
6-week *tuition-free* summer program for low-income RCSD students aiming to reverse summer learning loss, that capitalizes on this informal learning setting to implement (and demonstrate) student-center and inquiry-based pedagogies with the short-term goals of (a) developing urban students' confidence and love of learning and (b) improving their critical thinking and other key learning skills, and the ultimate goal of increasing the participants' school success, high school graduation and attendance to college.

The program will also be used as a site to enhance our student teachers' preparation (through field-based assignments of summer courses; internship opportunities both pre- and post- attending Warner teacher preparation program) and possibly even attracting more students to our teacher preparation program.

The program aims to become the first university affiliate of Horizons National (a national organization with a documented record and established evaluation system), and also be part of a new regional consortium (*Greater Rochester Summer Learning Association).*

Specific opportunity we needed to respond to:
Conger Gable contacted us in Fall 2009 with the offer to join in the expansion of the Horizons summer program in Rochester by being the first university affiliate of Horizons National; part of his offer involved an already secured $150,000 start-up gift offered to the first two-three programs participating in this initiative, as well as participation as a founding member of a new regional not-for-profit organization (*Greater Rochester Summer Learning Association)* that would help with on-going fund-raising for the program.

Warner mission and strategic priorities

Excerpts from our mission statement:
We believe that education can transform lives and make the world more just and humane … we strive to:

- ***prepare practitioners and researchers*** *who are knowledgeable, reflective, skilled and caring educators, who can make a difference in individual lives as well as their fields, and who are leaders and agents of change;*

- ***generate and disseminate knowledge*** *leading to new understandings of education and human development, on which more effective educational policies and practices can be grounded;*
- ***collaborate*** *– across disciplines, professions and constituencies –* ***to promote change*** *that can significantly improve education and support positive human development.*

NOTE: Education here is broadly defined as "promoting learning and development across contents and throughout the lifespan" and as such extends beyond K-12 schools.

Rationale and elaboration: Our mission statement came out of a SWOT analysis conducted in 2001 where we identified:
- our commitment and passion for social justice, which translates into **transforming individual lives and making the world more just and humane,** as a key motivator for all we do**;**
- We aim to affect both <u>individuals</u> (e.g., individual students and clients, our own students and their students/clients) and <u>systems</u> (e.g., specific schools/districts or other educational organizations, state/national policies; etc.) – these are complementary goals
- research (i.e., generating new knowledge) as another characterizing element, which is most powerful when it can be synergistic with our instructional and reform mission (i.e., inform the design of cutting-edge programs and effective reform efforts) ;
- we may have a competitive advantage in "bridging research and practice";
- we may have a competitive advantage in multi-disciplinary/field and collaborative projects.
- our limitations as a <u>small</u> and <u>under-resourced</u> school of education (which limits what we can do, and requires us to be as creative and synergistic as possible with what we have);
- Our mission work is accomplished in two complementary ways: through <u>what our graduates do</u> with the preparation received at Warner, and through <u>what our faculty/staff do directly</u> – and each of these two prongs calls for a different "path" on the map

Current strategic priorities:
1. Increase recognition (both locally and nationally) *(marketing)*
2. Provide rich student-alumni experience (including support in securing a job)
3. Raise research profile
4. Establish strategic partnerships *(to pursue reform and to extend beyond K-12 schools)*
5. Secure adequate resources to meet our aspirations
6. Unleash talent individually and collectively in pursuit of our mission

Q*uick* ***Screening:*** *Respond to the questions based on your knowledge/ "gut instincts" and identify what kind of data you would need to verify and expand upon your assumptions*

I. Potential value of the initiative:

• *What potential benefits could this initiative provide to Warner if successful?*	• Unique site for demonstrating to our student teachers (and other teachers in the community) inquiry pedagogy in action with urban children outside of the constraints of traditional schools – and to show them what urban students are capable of doing outside of these constraints • Visibility in the community for doing something that directly benefits RCSD students and can make a difference in their lives – while working within the constraints of our limited "capacity" • Potentially attractive for donors • Increased national visibility for being the first university site affiliated with Horizons National • Being part of an established national program will give our new summer program more credibility, and thus make it easier to fund-raise at the beginning • Being part of the summer learning consortium will also create valuable local connections and networking
• *What are potential limitations/ drawbacks of this initiative? How could those be minimized?*	• Small numbers/scope: only affecting 135 students a year (when fully developed) (and 15 "graduates a year) • Because its does not have the constraints of traditional classrooms, our student teachers may still question if the methods they see could work in a regular classroom • *Being an affiliate of Horizons National (rather than an independent program) will likely require some compromises • **Because Horizons traditionally starts with a K class, and adds another one each year, it would take 6 years before our secondary student teachers can benefit from this program • ***Once the start-up gift is over, fund-raising for the program may not be easy (and will be mostly our responsibility)
• *What main need(s) is this initiative addressing? How important are these needs to our organization/mission?*	• Addressing need in our community (and nationally) to address summer learning loss – and urban students achievement gap more generally; *this is an important need given our school commitment to social justice* • Need for our student teachers to "see in action" the methods we promote, and in situations involving urban kids; value for our student teachers of having opportunities to "try out" new methods first in a safer, low-stakes context; *these are key needs/values to fulfill our mission to prepare future teachers who are leaders and agents of change.*
• *How does this initiative fit with our mission and current strategic plan? How significant could it be to help us "move the needle"?*	• The initiative would help us enhance one of our main instructional programs (teacher preparation), in a way that will make it more • also engage in an educational innovation that can improve the quality of education in the region

Phase II Questions

1. What additional information would be critical to address some of the previous questions? How could you effectively gather that information?

- *Explore freedom allowed to Horizons programs in terms of curriculum. pedagogy and assessment *(we got confirmation that we could design our own curriculum and learning experiences, with the only caveat that we would need to* *do a minimum number of swimming lessons each week and do Horizons' required assessments in addition to whatever other assessment we chose to use)*

2. How could the initiative be modified to increase potential benefits and/or decrease limitations?

- **To move quicker to capacity, start with 2 classes, K and 5th, and add a new K and 5th class every year
- *** Try to identify upfront what are potential local foundations and individual donors who could help us support this program

Summary evaluation:

1. *Not valuable*
2. *Some value, but low – probably not worth it*
3. *It has value, although marginal to our mission*
4. ***Of definite value – worth exploring***
5. *Of high value, central to the mission – pursue if at all possible*

II. **Market opportunities of the initiative:**

• *Is there a demand for the products/services that this initiative will generate? Are there changes in the environment that may have affected the equilibrium in the market place and, thus, create a new opportunity that this initiative can address?*	• There are not enough affordable high-quality summer learning opportunities for low-income RCSD children; parents would jump at the opportunity for another 6-week full-day free program with the reputation of Horizons – as we know that the Harley Horizons site has had no problem filling their slots • No major changes in the environment – but there is an increased recognition of the importance of summer learning in the field
• *Who are the potential customers? Do we think that there is customers' dissatisfaction with the existing products/services or new needs that have emerged that could create a demand for what we are proposing? Do we think that customers would perceive the new product/service provided by the initiative as having a significant new value that exceeds competing offerings in the market?*	• Primary potential customers are all **low-income RCSD K-8 children** (over 9,000) and their families. Currently only a fraction of these kids are served by RCSD summer school - which is only half-day and "remedial" (usually not high-quality nor "interesting"); elements of the program such as swimming lessons, field trips, a more relaxed and informal learning environment, are likely to be more appealing than summer school to families and kids alike. • Secondary (but critical) customers are **potential funders** for the program – as they will be the ones really paying for the program since the program will be free. We have not tested this, but we expect that there will be Warner alumni and people in the community attracted by this program as a way to help RCSD students (although this could take them away from funding other Warner "core" needs/programs). Because the Harley Horizons program has been funded through some local foundations' grant, we know there is an interest to support this kind of program, and the association will help with positioning us and other summer programs in collaboration rather then competition with these potential funders – but we do not know how many programs and at what level they would be willing to fund.
• *Who would be willing to pay for the products/services?*	• The low-income population we are targeting would not be able to pay for the program directly • *It is possible, though, that some of the RCSD funds for summer learning could be accessed and leveraged, and perhaps also funds from United Ways • **Individual donors and/or local foundations may also be willing to pay for supporting a student's tuition
• *Who are the potential competitors? Are the competitors unable to serve the customers in this particular area?*	• As argued above, RCSD summer school is not really a competitor – as they offer a different and less desirable product (at least for most families) • As each Horizons program serves only 135 kids at capacity, Harley and other new local Horizons program or other informal summer programs sites connected with the summer learning association are not going to fulfill the demand for summer programs – so they do not really represent a competition, as long as we target different schools/areas in the city • Summer camps and other private summer learning experiences could be a competitor, but are not likely affordable by the population we are targeting

Phase II Questions:

1. What additional information would be critical to address some of the previous questions? How could you effectively gather that information?

- *Check on possible RSRB funding to support similar summer programs
- ** Check on potential donors' interest in supporting this initiative

2. How could the initiative be modified to increase its appeal and/or make it stand out compared with the competition?

Summary evaluation:

1. *(We think) there is very limited market for this initiative*
2. *(We think) there is some demand for the proposed product/service, but not clear who the customers are OR whether we can compete with our potential competitors*
3. *(We think) there is some demand for the product and potential for us to attract customers, and we are comparable to other potential competitors*
4. ***(We think) there is a clear demand for the product and potential for us to attract customers (but not clear if they would pay as needed for these services)***
5. *(We think) there is clear demand for the product and potential for us to attract customers, and reasons to believe that customers will be willing to pay for it*

III. **Capacity to implement the initiative:**

• *What kind of person is needed to lead this initiative? Who could do that, and how could this person be secured for this project?*	• As project leader, we need a person who has experience with urban students (esp. elementary age), knows and can put into practice innovative teaching methods, is entrepreneurial (i.e., can make things happen) – this person should be available at least some time during the year and full time in summer *(ex: retired teacher, or possibly even a current teacher)* • Lynn Gatto would be ideal for the job; since she was planning to retire from her teaching position at the time, it could be an ideal post-retirement job for her
• *What people resources would be needed to implement this initiative and why (i.e., what are the key qualifications for the tasks required)? How much of their time would the initiative take?*	• In addition to Lynn Gatto as Executive director, we would need to eventually secure up to 9 "lead teachers" each year who could implement student-centered pedagogy + up to 9 "junior teachers" (who could be our own recent grads) + up to 9 teacher assistants (who could be UG interested in a teaching career and a summer internship) – starting with only 2 of each the first year; each of these people would need to devote 1.5 months of summer + prior planning/PD – which is not difficult for current classroom teachers • It would require some time from dean (for planning, fund-raising, managing finances, and participating in new summer learning association), grant writer, finance and PR staff
• *Are these key players available to work this initiative? i.e., if already working within the organization, are they willing to do it and what will they have to give up in order to do this? if not, can they be hired or can their collaboration be secured otherwise (and how)?*	• Lynn was very interested in the initiative and role as Executive Director • She was very confident she could identify lead and junior teachers among RCSD teachers she knew and recent Warner grads • All of these people would have to pay paid an extra-comp (but would not require taking them away from other jobs) • We would somehow find the time for dean and others to do what needed – though it will diminish our ability to engage in other major new initiatives and likely add some stress to the system
• *What facilities, infrastructures or other resources would the initiative require? Do we have them? If yes, how would their use affect the rest of our operations? If no, how could they be acquired or their used secured?*	• We would need to secure eventually up to 9 classrooms on the UR campus + possibly some space for larger meetings/activities • While we did not have such space in our assigned facilities (at least not until and unless we got the new building), we found the Drama House at a reasonable rent as an interim space (holding up to 5 classes – so it could serve us well till summer 2012) • With the planned new building, we could have the needed space – but would have to share with summer classes in the evening (which will require some compromise/ mutual compromises and arrangements) *(NOTE: at the time we had to make this decision, we had plans for the new building but no certainty that we would be able to gather the finances needed to start construction)*

	● Since the UR pool is not set up for little kids, we would need to find an alternative solution for the swimming – which could be offered for free by the Genesee Valley Park (although it would require a considerable walk each time) ● *Bus transportation from the students' school to UR needed *(given Harley's experience, we could hope that RCSD would provide this transportation for free)*
● *Who would we need to secure as collaborators for the success of this initiative? Can we secure their collaboration, and if so how?*	● **Until we have a new building, we need to secure the collaboration of the College for the use of the Drama House (and possibly other classrooms after summer 2012) ● We also need to secure the collaboration of Genesee Valley Park for swimming (which should be easy given that one of their missions is to serve RCSD children) ● RCSD offered the bus transportation to Harley for free – so we could establish a collaboration with RCSD to do the same (and hopefully also get additional support)

Phase II Questions

1. What additional information would be critical to address some of the previous questions? How could you effectively gather that information?

- *Check whether RSRD would providing bussing, and under what conditions

2. How could the initiative be modified to increase potential benefits and/or decrease limitations?

- **For the first few years. Have our program house at Harley, so we can benefit of their infrastructure while we establish the curriculum, etc.

Summary evaluation:

1. *We do not have and cannot identify the necessary personnel/structures to implement the initiative*
2. *We have (or have identified) the necessary personnel/structures to do it, but they are not available at the moment*
3. *We have (or have identified) the necessary personnel/structures and there is willingness for their use, although at the expense of other important projects*
4. ***We have (or have identified) the necessary personnel/structures to do it and we have found a way to devote them to the proposed project***
5. *We have access to excellent personnel/structures to do it and the project will create synergy with other existing projects*

IV. **Financial viability of the initiative:**

• *What potential revenues or cost savings, if any, could the project generate? Under what circumstances? What do we expect the revenues/ cost-savings to be overtime?*	• Since a principle of the Horizons program is to offer the summer program for free so as to make it affordable for low-income children, there would be no revenues from the participants • We could possibly create some credit-bearing internship opportunities, but most of our students do not have room for such electives in their programs (although reading students, professional certification students and some UR undergraduates might) – so it is not likely to be a significant source of revenue, although it could help reduce a little bit the personnel costs • It could create some synergy with summer teaching internships in some programs (reading, ESL, and possibly special ed. as second certification) and make them affordable – while now we are not doing any because of added costs • It might attract gifts to Warner to support this program from people who would not otherwise give to Warner – but the funds would likely only go to fund part of the program costs (not help with our core operations)
• *What "marginal costs" (one-time start-up and on-going) would this initiative add to our existing operations? Under what circumstances? What use of existing structures/ services/ personnel would it require, and how would that affect the rest of our operations?*	• There would be essentially no start-up costs (except for planning time from dean and Executive Director) • Operating "cash" costs will be of the order of $1,600 per child (based on Harley's experience – which assumed in-kind contributions for swimming, buses and lunches) – which means about $50,000 in year 1, $100,000 in year 2, … and over $200,000 when operating at capacity (K-8 classes) • "Indirect costs" (administrative and facilities) and staff volunteering will have to be contributed in-kind
• *Do we expect the revenues to be greater/less than the expected costs? Under what circumstances/at what point in time would we "break even"?*	• Revenues will never be greater than costs; in fact, at best we would be able to cover our direct cash expenses with gifts and local grants – but we need to be prepared to have to supplement with school resources (like GEC funds), at least some years
• *If the costs are more than the revenues or there are upfront costs to come up with, how could the initiative be funded?*	• The start-up gift of $150,000 provided by Conger Gable would provide some security, especially at the beginning while establishing the program and getting ready for fund-raising • In the long-run, we would need to secure some renewable gifts and grants to maintain the program, as well as being ready to devote some of our annual fund when needed

Phase II Questions

1. What additional information would be critical to address some of the previous questions? How could you effectively gather that information?

- *Check on possible RSRB funding to support similar summer programs
- ** Check on potential donors' interest in supporting this initiative

2. How could the initiative be modified to increase potential benefits and/or decrease limitations?

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Summary evaluation:

1. *Too costly – out of reach*

2. ***Possible only if we can secure additional/external funding to support it***
3. *Could be covered within our current operating budget or existing grants, but at the expense of other important initiatives*
4. *Expected revenues will at least off-set costs and we can secure the necessary resources for start-up costs*
5. *Likely to generate substantial net revenues and we can secure the necessary resources for start-up costs*

V. **Potential risks of the initiative:**

• *What could we lose if we embark in this initiative and it is not successful (sink-the-boat mistake)? Under what circumstances and how likely is that to happen?*	• Not succeeding in running a "model" program would be embarrassing and counter-productive (but this seems an unlikely event if we could secure good people) • Having to stop this initiative because of lack of funding would be embarrassing – and that could happen if we are not successful in fund-raising in the long term (although in most years we could at least draw some from our annual fund) • Not stopping the initiative but maintaining it with Warner funds would take away from other core needs and projects (and not be affordable in tough economic years)
• *What could we do to minimize sink-the-boat risks?*	• Ensure we hire a capable Executive Director and great teaching staff • Reduce cash costs of the program as much as possible by running it "frugally" and also continuing to seek possible in-kind contributions to reduce cash costs • Create synergies with other Warner priorities (ex: grants that may pay for some internships) • Create some "reserves" for possible lean years
• *What could we lose if we do NOT embark in this initiative (missing-the-boat mistake)? Under what circumstances and how likely is that to happen? What could we do to minimize that risk?*	• Not doing this would mean missing a great opportunity to better prepare our student teachers – which could be especially costly as other schools of education in the area are thinking to participate in this initiative • Not being one of the first to join this initiative may mean that we lose the financial help provided by the $150K start-up gift – and also the visibility and prestige that would come from being a leader in this initiative • Starting our own summer program without taking advantage of this initiative would be much more costly – and unlikely to happen

Phase II Questions

1. What additional information would be critical to address some of the previous questions? How could you effectively gather that information?

2. How could the initiative be modified to increase potential benefits and/or decrease limitations?

Summary evaluation:

1. *The risks and implications of not being successful are too big for us to take*
2. *There are considerable risks if we fail, but we may be willing to take them under certain circumstances*
3. *The risks and implications of failing are balanced by those of not embarking in the initiative*
4. ***The risks and implications of not embarking in the initiative out-weigh those of failing in the initiative AND/OR we have good strategies to minimize sink-the-boat risks***
5. *Sink-the-boat mistakes are minimal/easy to address AND missing-the-boat mistakes are significant/worthwhile*

VI.

• *How much time do we have to take advantage of the opportunity to engage in this initiative? Does the initiative (or part of it) need to be implemented before a certain date or event in order to be effective? Would there be any advantages to waiting?*	• To secure the use of the $150K gift, we needed to make a decision and act quickly on it (by early 2010) so we would be able to start in summer 2010 with a pilot
• *How much time would it take us to get ready to implement the initiative?*	• We would need to get approval from Horizons National to be an affiliate (which may take more time because of being the first in that category) • We would have to act quickly, but we were confident we could put enough things in place (i.e., hire 4 teachers and come up with a curriculum) to start with a 2 class pilot given Harley's offer to use their facilities for the first year – and thus minimize the logistical challenges of finding a place on campus, setting up for swimming and meals, etc.
• *Do we have enough time to respond to the opportunity of engaging in this initiative? What is the "margin for error"?*	SAME
• *Is this the right time for us to take on this initiative?*	• Because of the timing of Lynn's retirement and the promise of the $150K start-up gift if we were among the first programs in the new association, this would be the ideal time for us to get started (before she could get involved in something else!)

Phase II Questions

1. What additional information would be critical to address some of the previous questions? How could you effectively gather that information?

2. How could the initiative be modified to increase potential benefits and/or decrease limitations?

Summary evaluation:

1. *We do not have the time necessary to respond to the opportunity to engage in this initiative*
2. *We may be able to respond to the opportunity to engage in this initiative timely, but is not be the right time for us to do it*
3. *We can respond to the opportunity to engage in this initiative timely, but at the expense of postponing other important projects*
4. *We can respond to the opportunity to engage in this initiative timely without sacrificing other priorities*
5. ***We can respond to the opportunity to engage in this initiative timely without sacrificing other priorities and we have a competitive advantage for doing so at this particular point in time***

VII. **Comparative value of the initiative:**

• *What are alternative ways to address the same need(s)? How do each of these alternative compare with the proposed initiative? Which one seems more cost-effective, and why?*	• **(a) Setting up an independent summer program on our own (instead of becoming an Horizons' affiliate):** it would have the advantage of more autonomy (ex: would not have to deal with swimming and certain evaluation requirements), but would not get the financial start-up support nor the benefit of the credibility of the Horizons organization • **(b) Starting a charter school:** this would clearly have more impact and do more for our teacher preparation programs, but it would be so expensive and time consuming that we are not in a position at Warner to embark in something like that unless we got a really high (and long term) gift • **(c) Starting a professional development school (PDS) partnership with an urban school already doing a summer program:** We would be working to support a "real" school and not have to worry about the finances, but would not have control on curriculum, hiring staff, etc.
• *What will we have to put aside if we decide to do this project, given our limited resources? That is, are there other projects we may have to drop in order to pursue this initiative? How would the value of these projects compare with that of the proposed initiative?*	• At the beginning, nothing would really need to be put aside immediately, as except for dean and Warner staff administrative time on the project the other people involved would be external and compensated with extra-comp – if we ended up having to support the project financially, though, this would be at the expense of some other project (since our resources are very limited)

Phase II Questions

1. What additional information would be critical to address some of the previous questions? How could you effectively gather that information?

2. How could the initiative be modified to increase potential benefits and/or decrease limitations?

Summary evaluation:

1. *We clearly have better uses for the same resources*
2. *We have better uses for the same resources at this point in time, although different circumstances (or modifications in the project) could change this evaluation*
3. *This initiative competes with other important projects for the same available resources*
4. ***The initiative will not require sacrificing other major priorities***
5. *The initiative will not require sacrificing other major priorities and we cannot think of a better use for the same resources*

Summary evaluation:

I.	Potential value of the initiative:	1	2	3	4	5
II.	Market opportunities of the initiative:	1	2	3	4	5
III.	Capacity to implement the initiative:	1	2	3	4	5
IV.	Financial viability of the initiative:	1	2	3	4	5
V.	Potential risks of the initiative:	1	2	3	4	5
VI.	Timeframe for the initiative:	1	2	3	4	5
VII.	Comparative value of the initiative:	1	2	3	4	5

OVERALL DECISION:

1. DROP – not worth pursuing
2. POST-PONE & RE-EVALUATE – it may be worthwhile to pursue under different circumstances, but not now
3. **DO IF POSSIBLE – worth doing, but only under the right circumstances (ex: dedicated funding; assignment of resources to competing projects; etc.)**
4. DO – worth doing now (even if it were to be at the expense of other projects)
5. MUST DO – it is one of the best things we could do now

Overall comments: