# INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, the civic engagement movement in American higher education has gained significant momentum. Colleges and universities are increasingly applying their tremendous intellectual and financial resources to address pressing local, national, and global issues, while seeking to unite faculty, students, and citizens as members of a shared community. Many institutions have come to play an important role in the development of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation that can enable students to be productive and engaged citizens. In a growing number of colleges and universities, a curriculum designed merely to funnel academically prepared students into specialized careers is seen as a narrow and incomplete conception of the potential that higher education has to offer. Similarly, a dominant emphasis on narrow, theoretical research has begun to give way to a new focus on applied, practical research that emerges from mutually beneficial university-community research partnerships. Aware of their embeddedness in their own physical location, many universities are also investing their resources in efforts to improve the physical and human conditions of local communities. At its best, the civic mission the university embraces and the civic responsibility it fosters in students flow less from an ethic of pure service or outreach than from a sense of ownership of and responsibility for community problems. A civically engaged college or university not only enables its students to make connections between classroom learning and real-world experiences, it helps build stronger communities by aligning its resources with local needs.

Broadly defined, we at the Pew Partnership think of civic engagement as the will and capacity to solve public problems. In particular, engagement is accomplished by applying faculty and student intellectual capital to address community problems; by fostering the skills and attitudes that will enable undergraduates to lead lives of civic responsibility; and by cultivating an action-oriented approach in which higher education institutions work to improve local conditions. The fullest expression of civic engagement in higher education is found in institutions where the commitment to civic education is strategic, pervasive, and integrated into the core functions of research, teaching, and service. Many universities articulate public goals in their mission statement; engaged institutions live out those commitments in their structure, values, and behavior.

We believe that engagement implies a greater role for colleges and universities in framing society's critical questions, in creating space for public deliberation that offers exposure to different points of view and enables people to form, express, and discuss their own opinions. Some leaders in higher education insist that civic engagement is accomplished simply through performing the core functions of research, teaching, and service, or that public outreach and citizenship preparation are distractions from those core functions. Along with the essayists in this volume, we believe that civic education and career preparation need not be seen as mutually exclusive, but instead can be mutually reinforcing. Similarly, community-based research – a collaborative research model in which university faculty and students partner with community practitioners to both advance knowledge and promote community improvement – can inform and support other faculty research and improve pedagogical techniques as well as help address local challenges. In short, engagement in the community need not detract from but can in fact strengthen the university's core mission and functions.

This monograph contains nine essays written by leaders in the field of higher education and community development, as well as a review essay about assessment and evaluation that is based on interviews with officials at three colleges and universities. The essayists include university outreach officers, distinguished scholars working in the field of civic engagement and higher education, community practitioners, former and current theological seminary faculty, two college presidents, and a recent university graduate. From these varied perspectives, the essayists offer a clear picture of the importance of civic engagement in higher education, describe the state of engagement efforts at several institutions, and suggest a host of ways in which to foster the civic mission of colleges and universities for the betterment of students, institutions, and communities. The final essay identifies some of the key lessons of the volume and offers recommendations for scholars and practitioners committed to enhancing the civic role of colleges and universities. The remainder of this introductory essay presents some of the themes that appear throughout the monograph and connects them to the literature on civic engagement and higher education.

### *Fostering Civic Engagement: Higher Education's Role in Framing the Public Debate*

Colleges and universities are uniquely suited to serve as sites of and engines for civic engagement. In H.S. Commager's words, "the university is the most honorable and the least corrupt institution in American life." The university, Commager argued, has traditionally exercised a moral influence in society, serving the interests of all of mankind and the interests of truth in a way that no other institution could.[1] Most every community is home to an institution of higher education – whether it is a large research university, a liberal arts college, a historically black university, or a tribal or community college – making colleges and universities an important and ubiquitous site for dedicated outreach and engagement.[2] David Steigerwald argues that both in their "prevailing core values" and their "institutional weight," colleges and universities are "perhaps the most likely places for the reinvigoration of the democratic spirit."[3] In order to bring about that reinvigoration, colleges and universities must be committed to stimulating public debate and deliberation around society's most important and most pressing issues. Few, if any, other institutions have the capacity and the public confidence to play such a part, one that higher education has historically embraced but that has recently fallen into disfavor.

Scholars and observers have proposed a number of reasons why higher education is less willing to take on an active role in the public sphere. According to Carol Geary Schneider, American intellectual culture underwent a transformation after World War Two in which knowledge, not virtue, became the raison d'être of colleges and universities. A new emphasis on enlightenment values of science, analytic capacity, reason, and value-free analysis resulted in a move away from overt involvement in civic themes and issues.[4] David Mathews similarly contends that the post-war development of professionalism, with its patronizing attitude toward the public, "and an accompanying romance with scientific objectivity, accelerated the displacement of the public."[5] These developments, in turn, contributed to a growing conviction among professionals that citizens were apathetic clients or consumers to be acted upon, not active participants capable of civic dialogue and public deliberation.

Today, other forces too prevent higher education from embracing a more civic-minded philosophy, mission, and curriculum. In particular, during times of economic hardship, budgetary concerns become paramount and push aside civic agendas and other "peripheral" functions not central to the academic mission of the institution. At the same time, college presidents are experiencing increasing pressures to focus on their role as fundraisers, which in turn leads them to overlook activities that do not appreciably add to the university's bottom line. In addition, engagement is often unfortunately associated with indoctrination into a particular value system that contradicts one of higher education's most revered tenets: freedom of expression. We discuss further these and other challenges later in the essay.

Many scholars have pointed out that colleges and universities, and their presidents in particular, were in the past more willing to step into the political fray. But the kind of engagement we propose does not necessarily ask presidents, trustees, administrators, faculty, and staff to stake out a position on controversial issues of the day or indoctrinate their students into particular ideologies or political philosophies. Rather, it exhorts higher education stakeholders to engage students, the public, and community partners in thoughtful, reflective, democratic dialogue and insists on respecting the diversity of opinions that result from that dialogue. The essayists in this volume document some of the many ways and reasons why institutions of higher education should demonstrate a commitment to civic engagement: intellectually, structurally, institutionally, behaviorally, and ideationally.

Bruce Mallory and Nancy Thomas contend that universities need "intentionally designed, permanent spaces on campus for identifying, studying, deliberating, and planning action regarding pressing issues with ethical or social implications."[6] Peter Levine of the University of Maryland's Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) has argued that what we need is not more talk but improved talk that allows stakeholders with different backgrounds and expectations to reach common ground. Mallory and Thomas identify several characteristics of effective dialogue, including sustained conversations; discussions guided by trained, neutral facilitators; and a progression that starts with personal perspectives, includes identifying common language and studying the facts and issues, and concludes by moving from dialogue to action. In order to fulfill their potential to "serve the interests of the whole of mankind and the interests of truth," as Commager eloquently put it, colleges and universities must be committed to civic leadership, democratic dialogue, and public engagement.

Those who wish to renew the civic mission of American higher education must not lose faith. As one working paper on this issue aptly points out, "If collegiate institutions are to retain their privileged positions within society, benefiting from public support and tax-exempt status, more attention must be given to documenting the reasons the public should then invest in institutions that are responsible not just for teaching and job preparation, but also for research and service to society."[7] The millions of dollars in public funding that benefit land-grant and other state-sponsored universities in particular compel these institutions to think deeply about how they can more fully engage the communities of which they are a part.

### *Fostering Civic Engagement: Preparing Students for Active, Responsible Citizenship*

For thousands of students, higher education is the gateway to a better life. College and university graduates hope to put their knowledge and skills to work in careers that offer more responsibility, satisfaction, and earning potential than jobs that do not require a college degree. Much of the focus in higher education is on preparing students for success in the workplace, and rightly so. But the Pew Partnership and the essayists in this monograph believe that more attention needs to be paid to preparing students for participation in their communities.

The population of students at undergraduate institutions – motivated, eager to learn, open-minded – represents great potential as the next generation of community leaders. Despite their low levels of political engagement, many observers have noted young people's enthusiasm about service learning and volunteering. For example, in a 2002 survey CIRCLE found that 40 percent of people ages 15-25 reported volunteering within the past year. At the same time, however, current community leaders bemoan the lack of public spiritedness in today's college and university students.[8] The causes of this disengagement are many, but one way to address its effects is for the institutions where students spend their formative years to commit to replacing this disillusionment or apathy with a sense of civic responsibility and a willingness to take action. Young people have extremely low rates of voting; in presidential election years between 1972 and 2000, the national voter turnout rate for 18- to 24-year-olds declined by 13 percent.[9] Other research by CIRCLE has found that nearly six in ten 15- to 25-year olds are completely disengaged from civic life, and fewer than four in ten believe citizenship entails certain responsibilities.[10]

Higher education has the ability to reach young people who, we are often told, are the most politically and civically disengaged segment of the American population, transforming their enthusiasm about community service and volunteerism into a deeper structural understanding of social problems and a willingness to become involved in civic and community affairs.[11] As Harry Boyte has put it, "The goals of community service typically include self-esteem, a sense of personal worth, and consciousness of personal values, but they omit attention to power, politics, and community impact."[12] With guidance by college faculty and administrators, service and outreach activities are connected to larger structural and institutional forces and to students' roles and responsibilities as citizens of local, national, and global communities. In this way, service becomes not merely an episodic, feel-good activity but a critical source of insight into social problems and a commitment to reflecting on and addressing the roots of those challenges. Service should not be a substitute for civic and political awareness and engagement, but a complement to it. Other forms of outreach, too, must form and maintain connections between academic learning and community improvement. University-community research partnerships, which we discuss later in this essay, should not be a one-way street in which the community is acted upon by detached, expert researchers, but a truly collaborative enterprise in which all constituencies help to develop the research design and benefit from the research findings.

One of the most powerful ways in which higher education can demonstrate engagement is by committing to nurture in students the civic skills and attitudes that will enable them to be responsible and effective citizens. Some have argued that the development of civic skills, competence, and conscience is even more important than the transmission of civic knowledge in colleges and universities.[13] Civic education therefore does not take place only in the classroom, but occurs in the crucible of day-to-day university life that undergraduates experience through co-curricular activities and campus culture, for instance. By bringing contemporary issues and problems into the curriculum and into students' college experience, faculty members can both transmit content knowledge and inspire a sense of civic responsibility and ownership for community problems.[14]

The civic engagement literature has identified a number of civic skills that colleges and universities may seek to cultivate. For instance, the second to last essay in this volume, which deals with assessment strategies for civic education, documents the ways in which Tusculum College encourages students to master a set of "Virtue Competencies" including civility, self-knowledge, and an ethic of social responsibility. Critical thinking, problem solving skills, deliberation, conflict resolution, character, teamwork, and leadership are other examples of civic skills. Unlike mastery of a particular academic subject, which can be an isolated and independent project, the mastery of civic skills includes the development of both individual and social skills and knowledge that enable students to act more effectively as members of a community.

Clearly, many institutions are already convinced of the value of actively and intentionally fostering the development of students' civic skills and attitudes. Claiborne Walthall discusses how Brown University's Center for Public Service and service learning courses help prepare students for responsible citizenship as well as strengthen the University's partnerships with the community. Anne Colby, Thomas Ehrlich, Elizabeth Beaumont, and Jason Stephens emphasize the importance of motivation, political efficacy, and political participation as components of the "civic maturity" of undergraduates, and argue that curriculum, extra-curricular activities, and campus culture are key sites in which to integrate civic concerns. Nancy Thomas points to a number of other academic reforms, including interdisciplinary studies, learning communities, and deliberative dialogue, that can enhance student engagement as well as institutional commitment to social and community issues.

The burgeoning research in the field of civic engagement and higher education has made a great deal of progress in documenting the value of civic education and the ways in which it can be incorporated into undergraduate life to enhance student learning and foster a sense of connectedness to local, national, and international communities. Assessment efforts underway at many institutions aim to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement by carefully tracking indicators of student engagement. In addition, assessment strategies often have as part of their goal integrating and coordinating civic education with other parts of the curriculum and undergraduate life. What remains to be accomplished in many institutions is to weave existing curricular, co-curricular, and other initiatives into a holistic, integrated, institutionalized approach. Students must come to see community service, service learning, volunteerism, community-based research, and civic skills development not as episodic opportunities to explore during their undergraduate careers but as the beginning of a long-term contribution to society and part of their training as active citizens in a democracy.

### *Fostering Civic Engagement: Community Partnerships and Applied Research*

Another way in which colleges and universities can embrace a public mission is by establishing and maintaining partnerships with local communities. Two forms that these partnerships often take include targeted physical investments in the community that apply the university's resources to address pressing local needs, and community-based research approaches in which university faculty and community practitioners work together in order to advance knowledge and bring about community improvement.

Judith Rodin's essay documents how the University of Pennsylvania's investments in West Philadelphia helped to stimulate neighborhood improvement, economic and retail development, and the housing market, as well as improve local public education. Penn's institutional engagement both helped to revitalize the West Philadelphia community and offered a positive example of engagement to its students and faculty. As David Wilson indicates in his essay about Auburn University's partnership with Alabama Black Belt communities, university-community partnerships can be most beneficial when universities focus more on listening to and working alongside community stakeholders than on offering assistance through a traditional top-down paradigm. Wilson also describes the ways in which Auburn officially recognized the value of faculty service and outreach through changes to its tenure and promotion system. Osvaldo Cardoza and Gustavo Salinas write about the University of Texas-Pan American's Office of Center Operations and Community Services (CoSERVE), which is comprised of 23 centers that provide education, training, and professional expertise to local, state, national, and international communities. CoSERVE devotes particular attention to fostering innovative solutions to economic challenges unique to the South Texas-Mexico border. Rather than looking outside to a political official or expert to solve the community's problems once and for all, a strong university partner can help citizens to look within themselves for the solutions they seek. David Mathews of the Kettering Foundation describes this as a process of transformation from public service to public building.[15]

"Public scholarship" or "community-based research" facilitates what the influential Wingspread Declaration has called a "more porous and interactive flow of knowledge between universities and communities."[16] With community-based research, or what is sometimes called the "scholarship of engagement," faculty members collaborate with community practitioners in order to apply and disseminate knowledge with the ultimate goal of community improvement. Traditional research confers most of its benefits and rewards on individual faculty and higher education institutions and often views community members as clients or consumers of services, rather than active participants in community development. Community-based research, by contrast, allows universities and communities to enjoy the fruits of reciprocal, mutually beneficial partnerships. In arguing for the role of higher education in rebuilding civic life, Zelda F. Gamson insists that universities "must recognize that communities are not voids to be organized and filled by the more knowledgeable; they are well-developed, complex, and sophisticated organisms that demand to be understood on their own terms – or they will not cooperate."[17] Just as civic education efforts are ultimately designed to strengthen democracy by educating responsible citizens, the scholarship of engagement can strengthen the ties between universities and communities in a way that advances the cause of community improvement.

Aside from large research universities such as the University of Pennsylvania, programs at other institutions can offer important lessons about how to stimulate student engagement and foster strong partnerships. For example, in his essay Carlyle Ramsey explores how rural, tribal, and community colleges such as Danville Community College can contribute to the civic health of local, state, and national communities. James Waits and Robert Franklin demonstrate that theological schools play an important role in building inclusive communities, inspiring in students a sense of social justice, and teaching the skills needed for democratic citizenship. Community colleges and theological seminaries can set a powerful example of engagement for traditional liberal arts colleges and research universities. As Edward Zlotkowski eloquently states in reflecting on Campus Compact's Indicators of Engagement project, "I have been enormously impressed by the willingness of so many community college leaders to 'walk the talk.' In doing so, they have won levels of community trust and respect that should be the envy of four-year institutions."[18]

Supporters of the scholarship of engagement and university investments in local communities too often overlook the community's perspective on the features of effective university engagement. In Part Three of this monograph, John Bryant and Miriam West describe the benefits of university-community partnerships from the community practitioner's perspective. Bryant and West spent many years with the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative, a school-based community program that offers a variety of initiatives including tutoring, mentorships, internships, and college preparation assistance. Since its inception, CYC has partnered with a number of neighboring universities, and Bryant and West indicate that they and other CYC staff members have noted an increasing willingness among local universities to become actively engaged in community problem-solving efforts. Bryant and West document several ways in which universities and communities together can help to address pressing local challenges.

In order for a college or university to demonstrate a genuine commitment to civic engagement, it must be willing to enter into long-term, democratic, reciprocal, mutually beneficial relationships with its surrounding community. The substance and tenor of university-community relationships matter as much as, if not more than, their existence. The best university-community partnerships can enhance student learning, faculty research, institutional engagement, and community problem-solving and revitalization.

### *Challenges*

A great deal of evidence points to the value and effectiveness of civic engagement on the part of American colleges and universities. What prevents more institutions of higher education from embracing a civic mission and purpose?

One of the most often cited challenges involves the dominance of academic departments and disciplines in today's colleges and universities, which tend to overemphasize the marketability of technical skills and deemphasize contribution to civic life.[19] A primary focus on specialized, expert knowledge and the self-interested purposes of higher education may discourage a willingness to look outside one's own field to the broader civic and social purposes of knowledge. As Elizabeth Hollander and Matthew Hartley put it, "the landscape of higher education looks like a prairie with a lot of unconnected silos which could, if brought together, provide a rich feed for the civic renewal movement."[20] The Wingspread Declaration on Renewing the Civic Mission of the American Research University articulates the concern that research-oriented schools have become increasingly competitive and individualistic: "Every department, every discipline, every unit of our research universities experiences pressures to draw back from connection to the whole."[21]

The support of college presidents and other administrative leaders is often essential for the articulation and execution of university engagement. As a recent Wingspread statement put it, "presidents, chancellors and provosts have a vital role in championing engagement, not only as a result of their position at the nexus of campus and community, but also as those individuals most vested in the leadership and success of their institutions."[22] However, because college and university presidents' and other top administrators' primary concern is often their roles as fundraisers and managers, questions of civic engagement may be pushed aside. In fact, the faculty members most committed to the civic purposes of higher education may not wish to assume the burdens of administration, preferring instead to make their mark through teaching undergraduates and forging relationships with community practitioners. Presidents and other administrative leaders, in turn, may lack knowledge of or information about the possibilities and benefits of civic engagement activities or may prefer to use their positions to exert control over budgets and academic departments rather than to establish connections with the community. Finally, particularly during difficult economic times, the pressure to use the university's budget to meet basic teaching and research needs slants institutional emphasis away from questions of civic engagement.

Another commonly mentioned barrier to enhancing the civic role of higher education is what some believe to be an "excessive" focus in colleges and universities on preparation for the workplace and on the "publish or perish" approach to faculty research, scholarship, and rewards.[23] With the cost of a college education rising faster each year, students place great emphasis on developing the skills and knowledge that will lead to career and financial success first and civic responsibility second – if at all. As Ernest Boyer eloquently put it, "Increasingly, the campus is being viewed as a place where students get credentialed and faculty get tenured, while the overall work for the academy does not seem particularly relevant to the nation's most pressing civic, social, economic, and moral problems."[24] Indeed, faculty encounter disincentives to engaged teaching and scholarship when universities do not acknowledge community-based research in the tenure and promotion process. As the essays in Part Three demonstrate, some community colleges and theological seminaries as well as liberal arts colleges prioritize student civic education and reward engaged scholarship to a greater extent than do universities focused primarily or exclusively on career preparation and pure research.

We believe that education for democracy and education for the economy need not be mutually exclusive.[25] Rather than emphasize primarily the private purposes of higher education, colleges and universities can demonstrate a stronger commitment to public responsibilities and a stronger connection between public and private goals. While faculty and student support are also critical, many of the essayists argue that without institutional commitment to public scholarship and civic engagement, curricular, extra-curricular, and other initiatives to foster this engagement will ring hollow.

### *Conclusion*

Leaders at many institutions of higher education might argue that civic engagement is being "taken care of" simply by performing the university's traditional functions of teaching the liberal arts and providing service and volunteer opportunities. Our view of civic engagement encompasses a broader perspective. As one report puts it, "shifting institutional leadership and grant-based funding often relegates community partnerships to boutique initiatives, paraded out when the university needs to demonstrate its engagement bona fides. We have created a 'thousand points of light' but not enough concentrated heat to produce institutionalization."[26]

At its best, civic engagement is not an isolated, uncoordinated commitment to service learning, volunteerism, or experiential education, but is an integrated, strategic commitment on the part of the university community, from the trustees, to the president, to college administrators and community partners, to faculty and staff, to students. At engaged institutions, multiple stakeholders are united by a common language and a dedication to fostering the civic skills, attitudes, and values that will enable students to take an active role in their communities both during the college years and after graduation. In addition, engaged institutions offer faculty the opportunity to forge sustained, mutually beneficial connections with the community and to apply their skills toward the goal of local improvement. Finally, a commitment to civic engagement can enable universities to develop institution-wide relationships with their communities, approaching those relationships with an attitude of reciprocity and shared problem-solving, not merely service or need.

Ultimately, student civic education, university-community research partnerships, and other engagement activities can build stronger ties between universities and communities that advance knowledge, enhance local capacity, and bring about community improvement. Perhaps better than any other institution, colleges and universities can convey the message that citizenship is about more than academic expertise, professional success, or the occasional volunteer opportunity. Citizenship, in fact, involves a much broader set of skills and attitudes.[27]

# *Lessons and Recommendations*

# LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this edited monograph, nearly twenty distinguished leaders in the fields of higher education and community development have shared their insights about how to enhance the civic role of American colleges and universities. Along with the essayists, the Pew Partnership believes that higher education has a larger role to play in helping to address national and community problems and in preparing students for engaged, responsible citizenship. The ten papers in this volume explore how universities can become more involved in community problem-solving and civic education and identify the benefits and challenges of these efforts for both universities and communities. Based on their experiences as recent college graduates, university leaders and administrators, and community practitioners, the essayists draw on both theory and practice to answer the question of how to enhance higher education's civic mission in order to bring about community improvement. Together, the essays explore how and why colleges and universities should form community partnerships, not simply perform community service, and educate citizens, not merely consumers.

As we move forward in thinking about ways to strengthen the civic role of American higher education, the essays suggest a number of lessons and recommendations that can guide civic engagement studies and practices in the future.

### *Defining the Engaged Institution*

- For colleges and universities, too often "engagement" is synonymous only with service and volunteerism on the part of undergraduates. As worthy as service and outreach efforts are, true engagement encompasses an institution-wide commitment to civic education and community problem-solving efforts that are much broader in scope.

- Engaged institutions exemplify citizenship both by forming and maintaining partnerships with local communities and by training responsible citizens through curricular, extra-curricular, and other activities.
- The kind of engagement we envision asks higher education stakeholders to engage students, the public, and community partners in thoughtful, reflective, democratic dialogue and insists on respecting the diversity of opinions that result from that dialogue. In order to bring about the "reinvigoration of the democratic spirit," colleges and universities must be committed to stimulating public debate and deliberation around society's most important and most pressing issues.
- The articulation of a public mission in a college or university's mission statement can influence the priorities and culture of higher education institutions and can provide a powerful justification and motivation for the institutionalization of engagement. But colleges and universities must also be willing to live out that mission in their structure and behavior.
- There are many other ways in which higher education institutions can demonstrate their commitment to civic engagement. Examples include encouraging university-community partnerships and "public scholarship"; nurturing the development of students' civic skills; creating learning communities that allow students to study across disciplines; and promoting deliberative dialogue around important social and political issues.
- An institution-wide commitment to positive civic engagement in the community can provide a powerful example and stimulus to college and university efforts to educate productive, responsible citizens.
- Different kinds of institutions have much to learn from one another. Many rural, tribal, and community colleges have forged strong ties with their communities and dedicated themselves to addressing local needs, such as economic and workforce development. Part of the mission of many theological schools is to teach students to build inclusive communities, work for social justice, and promote the common good. As some of the largest employers and most influential institutions in their geographic areas, research universities can set an example of advancing academic and civic knowledge while at the same time strengthening local communities.
- Ultimately, treading the path of engagement can and should serve both universities and communities by advancing theoretical knowledge, training productive citizens, and helping to solve community problems.

### *Building Successful University-Community Partnerships*

- Several distinctive features characterize successful university-community partnerships, including communication about procedures, goals, and priorities; the ability to adapt to external changes; and a vision on both sides for positive change. By working collaboratively, universities and communities can help one another fulfill their priorities and missions.
- In order to be successful and to be sustained, faculty, students, and administrators must be committed to applying academic knowledge to public service in a way that benefits all interested parties. Community partnerships must not be seen as simply an add-on component of university activities, but instead must hold intrinsic value for those who become engaged with the community.
- Successful partnerships are part of a long-term process and should not be seen as merely episodic, feel-good opportunities to perform service for the community. Universities must be committed to acting with the community, not simply acting upon the community.
- Community practitioners should be creative in seeking out partnerships with local universities, for example, by taking part in student-initiated programs, collaboratively submitting grant proposals, and proposing programs and initiatives in which universities can participate.
- Universities and communities must share similar long-term goals for their partnerships. The university, for example, can reasonably expect partnerships to foster the advancement of knowledge and to improve the living and working conditions of its surrounding area. Community practitioners, meanwhile, can make greater strides in addressing challenging local issues with the help of college faculty, staff, and students. In order to keep the partnership going, both stakeholders must feel as though they are benefiting from it and that, at the same time, a larger purpose of community improvement is also being served.

### *Nurturing Civic Skills*

- For higher education to graduate productive citizens, not merely professionals, colleges and universities must focus on both the “hard” skills of academic knowledge and the “soft” skills of tolerance, conflict resolution, problem-solving, and leadership.
- Higher education can enhance the civic maturity of undergraduates by developing their understanding of civic and political concepts, fostering a motivation to act to address community concerns, and teaching the skills that will encourage civic and political participation.
- Colleges and universities must make a more intentional effort to structure the undergraduate experience as a whole – including curriculum, extra-curricular activities, and campus culture – in a way that facilitates the task of “educating citizens” for civic responsibility.

- Too often, academic and civic knowledge are seen as separate, even mutually exclusive enterprises, when in fact both kinds of learning are necessary in order to graduate productive citizens as well as skilled professionals.
- Universities must strike a balance between providing a highly structured curriculum that advances engagement but stifles student creativity, and a completely open curriculum that provides little guidance or structure for students to realize their interests and passions.
- Integrating a service learning requirement into departmental course offerings, and making that requirement a core component that is directly tied to course content, could enhance student engagement with the local community outside of the college gates.

### ***Final Lessons: Leadership Matters, and the Benefits of Assessment***

- Strong support on the part of the college or university president is almost a prerequisite for an engaged institution. While faculty and student buy-in are also critical, without a voice from the top articulating an institution-wide vision, engagement efforts are in danger of remaining episodic and incoherent.
- In a promising trend, 80 percent of member campuses in Campus Compact's 2003 Annual Membership Survey indicated that administrators and faculty actively support community engagement programs. Faculty and administrative backing of the establishment and maintenance of engagement initiatives and activities enhances the possibility that engagement will become an intentional part of the university's mission.
- College presidents are uniquely positioned to provide the vision and help encourage the culture shift that can translate into an abiding institutional commitment to engagement. They can do so by becoming personally involved in regional and community activities; mobilizing faculty, staff, and students to participate in engagement initiatives; and fostering inclusive, collaborative leadership. Administrative leaders, too, can take charge of implementing a grand vision in the day-to-day programs and activities of the university.
- Civic engagement efforts, in particular attempts to foster students' civic skills, can benefit from assessment strategies designed to identify the strengths and weaknesses of these efforts. Assessment can build support for civic engagement internally and point to ways in which existing initiatives can be improved. Overall, assessment tools and strategies can both improve the content and enhance the long-term sustainability of engagement efforts.

# ENDNOTES

1 "The Crisis of Uncertainty," in S. Hook, ed., *In Defense of Academic Freedom* (New York: Pegasus, 1971), qtd. in John S. Brubacher, *On the Philosophy of Higher Education:* 124.

2 For example, the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Tribal Colleges and Universities Program grants awards to allow tribal colleges and universities to build, expand, equip, and renovate their own facilities, especially those that are available to and used by the larger community. See "Department of Housing and Urban Development Announces Awards to Tribal Colleges and Universities Program," at http://www.omhrc.gov/OMH/WhatsNew/2pgwhatsnew/special187.htm, for more information.

3 David Steigerwald, "Educating Citizens," Book Review, *The Civic Arts Review,* 16(2) (Summer-Fall 2003): 13-15.

4 Carol Geary Schneider, "Educational Missions and Civic Responsibility: Toward the Engaged Academy," pp. 98-123 in Thomas Ehrlich, ed., *Civic Responsibility and Higher Education.* (Westport: American Council on Educational Oryx Press, 2000).

5 David Mathews, "How Concepts of Politics Control Concepts of Civic Responsibility," pp. 149-173 in Ehrlich, ed., *Civic Responsibility and Higher Education:* 59.

6 Bruce Mallory and Nancy Thomas, "When the Medium is the Message: Promoting Ethical Action Through Democratic Dialogue," *Change* 35 (5) (2003), 11.

7 "Contributing to the Civic Good: Assessing and Accounting for the Civic Contributions of Higher Education," Working Paper, Jane V. Wellman. The New Millennium Project on Higher Education Costs, Pricing, and Productivity, July 1999, 11.

8 Nancy L. Thomas, "Community Perceptions: What Higher Education Can Learn by Listening to Communities," Program for Democratic Values and Practices. Available from www.oup.org/curriculum/files/commpercep.doc

9 Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, www.civicyouth.org

10 *Ibid.*

11 According to Campus Compact's 2003 Annual Membership Survey, across member campuses, an average of 36 percent of students participate in service activities, representing a record high level of involvement. See "Highlights and Trends in Student Service and Service-Learning," at http://www.compact.org/newscc/highlights.html.

12 Harry C. Boyte, "Civic Populism," *Perspectives on Politics* 1(4) (December 2003): 737-742.

13 Cynthia Gibson, "From Inspiration to Participation: A Review of Perspectives on Youth Civic Engagement," The Grantmaker Forum on Community & National Service/Carnegie Foundation, November 2001, available from www.gfcns.org/pubs/Moving%20Youth%20report%20REV3.pdf; Thomas, "Community Perceptions: What Higher Education Can Learn by Listening to Communities."

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## PART ONE

# *Engagement Through University-Community Partnerships*

# KEY FEATURES OF SUCCESSFUL UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

*David Wilson*

The first group of American colleges and universities to dot the nation's landscape did not have public service, outreach, or engagement as a core component of their missions. In 1636, when Harvard University was founded, and for the institutions that were established over the next two centuries, the primary function of higher education was to produce an educated class of leaders. It was not until 1862, when Congress enacted the Morrill Act, that a different set of universities came into existence. Known as the Land-Grant Act, this sweeping piece of legislation brought into existence a cadre of institutions whose raison d'être was to provide access to higher education for common folk, and to produce research that could help America develop as a nation. These institutions, which ranged from Penn State University to the University of Florida, exist in every state in the nation and, arguably, have made higher education in America the envy of the world.

Today, from the State of Alabama to Alaska, and from Maine to California, American colleges and universities are playing active roles in creating change in their local communities, states, and regions. Many have even internationalized their mission as extending far beyond local communities; they see the world as their campuses and communities. We, at Auburn University, a land-grant University and the largest higher education institution in the State of Alabama, have devoted much effort over the last decade into crystallizing our mission and realigning the reward structure of the University to reflect the seriousness with which we take the outreach function.

Realignment of mission and rethinking of the tenure and promotion process at

Auburn did not occur overnight, but involved a nearly decade-long period of engagement among the faculty, senior administration, the governing board and citizens of the State of Alabama. We learned numerous lessons along the way, some of which I share with our colleagues across the nation who desire to place their universities at the core of efforts to promote community renewal, economic development, and social and educational policy reform.

What are some of the key features of successful university-community partnerships? And what are some of the lessons we have learned over the last decade?

### ***Make Faculty Work Count Where it Matters Most – In the Tenure and Promotion Process***

Institutions that are serious about developing university-community partnerships with faculty as the primary drivers of these initiatives must first determine how important these partnerships are in helping institutions carry out their missions. If university-community partnerships are important, the reward system must reflect the value placed on those partnerships. If faculty sense that their efforts are not valued at the university, there will not be a sustained effort given and, at best, these partnerships languish. At Auburn, as we thought about needs of the State of Alabama which were not being met, we immediately concluded that if we were going to unleash 1,200 faculty members to connect their research with the state's greatest challenges, we had to rethink what we were rewarding. In the beginning, we made it known to the entire University community that we were not interested in engaging in any efforts that would be perceived by faculty as "dumbing down" the University's research agenda.

What did we do? To further faculty understanding of outreach as an academic endeavor, I appointed a faculty-dominated committee to investigate the academic legitimacy of outreach.[28] Chaired by an associate dean (and full professor) of liberal arts, this committee provided a definition of university outreach that continues to guide our work today.

Outreach was defined as applying academic expertise to the direct benefit of external audiences in support of University and unit missions. A faculty endeavor may be regarded as outreach scholarship for purposes of tenure and promotion if all of the following conditions are met:

1. *There is a substantive link with significant human needs and societal problems, issues, or concerns;*
2. *There is a direct application of knowledge to significant human needs and societal problems, issues, or concerns;*
3. *There is utilization of the faculty member's academic and professional expertise;*
4. *The ultimate purpose is for the public or common good;*
5. *New knowledge is generated for the discipline and/or the audience or clientele; and*
6. *There is a clear link/relationship between the program/activities and an appropriate academic unit's mission.*

Outreach, the Committee concluded, is not expected of all faculty at Auburn, but those who engage in it would be subjected to the same, if not more intense, rigorous peer review process as those faculty members engaged in basic research.

The Committee further identified the lack of recognition for academic outreach in the University reward system as the primary impediment to the integration of outreach with other campus-wide missions. It called on me as the chief outreach officer to determine how best Auburn could design a peer review process to assess the quality of faculty outreach and, where appropriate, provide recognition to faculty who performed it well. The Faculty Senate adopted their report and thus set outreach on a different course at Auburn.

Given this recognition of outreach as an academic endeavor, a subsequent committee, chaired by a distinguished University professor, with several titled professors as members, was charged with developing a model whereby faculty outreach work could be recognized in the reward system.[29] That committee refined the conditions under which faculty work could be regarded as outreach and provided models for assessment, making clear that the process would need to work at the departmental level, and noting that the faculty handbook would have to be revised to provide for inclusion of outreach scholarship as coequal with teaching and research. The committee made it explicitly clear that this was not an effort to "dumb down" the faculty. Finally, the committee charged each academic department with developing guidelines for measuring outreach in which some faculty members perform below the benchmark, some reach it, others exceed it, and a few become models of excellence with national and even international reputations.

The leadership of the University Outreach Committee, joined by others throughout the University, is committed to the ideal of an engaged institution. Engagement, as defined by the Kellogg Commission, is a philosophical view about the nature and responsibilities of the American university in the present time. Engagement suggests that a vital, close, and reciprocal relationship must exist between a university and its various constituencies. This relationship goes beyond traditional extension, continuing education, and public service. According to the Commission, it embraces intentional institutional redesign of "teaching, research, and extension and service functions to become even more...productively involved with their communities, however community may be defined...Embedded in the engagement ideal is a commitment to sharing and reciprocity."

The groundwork has been laid at Auburn so that the intellectual resources of the University can be effectively applied to the needs of society and the University can reaffirm its land-grant mission in the context of "new and demanding" times. Through this reaffirmation, the intellectual work of the University has become more informed and more effective, whether in the form of undergraduate and graduate education, research, or outreach.

### *Understand and Appreciate a Community's History and Culture*

Too often universities venture into communities like a bull in a china shop. We posture ourselves as "know-it-alls," having all the expertise that communities need and hell-bent on applying it with little or no regard for the history and culture of communities. This is a recipe for a bad marriage.

We have promoted a perspective at Auburn over the last decade or so to immerse ourselves into communities as deeply as we can when seeking to develop alliances and partnerships. Two exemplars of this approach are Auburn's Rural Studio and our Uniontown Cares program. Both of theses initiatives are set in the Alabama Black Belt region, a 12-county area of the state with some of the highest poverty rates in America.

Recognized as one of the most innovative contextual-based learning programs in the nation, the Rural Studio was founded by late Auburn University Professor Samuel Mockbee and former School of Architecture Department Head D.K. Ruth. Approximately thirty second-year architecture students spend an entire semester living in rural Hale County, Alabama, which is a three and one-half hour drive from Auburn's main campus. While there, they learn of the history of the region and come face-to-face with issues of poverty, institutional racism and its remnants, economic inequality, and environmental injustice. Under the guidance of University professors, these students have completed over thirty design/build projects ranging from homes to community centers. The students, the vast majority of them White and middle class, have rarely, if ever, lived in a community with poor Blacks who are eking out a living the best way they can. Our students undergo a paradigm shift after living in Hale County. They understand and respect the contributions Blacks in Alabama have made to the State's economic growth while simultaneously recognizing that their hard work on behalf of the State has returned little benefit to them. These architecture students come away from the Rural Studio experience with a deeper view of community challenges.

In Uniontown, Alabama, an area 15 miles from Hale County, Auburn University undertook another initiative to create local partnerships to revitalize an area that was once a thriving market center. Most of the plants had closed, unemployment was in the high double-digits, and sub-standard housing was the norm. The town was polarized around race, and many residents were disengaged from civic activities and local government. With support from the Kettering Foundation, a diverse team of Auburn University professors and outreach staff began to work with numerous partners in Uniontown, including elected officials, the private sector, and faith-based organizations, to create a strategic plan for the community. We also learned a great deal in Uniontown. Joe Sumners, Auburn's Director of the Economic Development Institute and one of the team members, described our efforts in Uniontown in this way:

> *"In the first phase of the Uniontown project, Auburn focused on working through an existing institution (the city government) and attempted to create a new one (a community development corporation) to help strengthen the community. This approach met with only modest success. It was not until Auburn changed its approach that we began to see real progress in 'community-building.' The lesson here is that real and lasting change requires an 'inside-out' and 'bottom-up' approach, in addition to 'outside-in' and 'top-down.' The lesson is not that economically disadvantaged communities need no external assistance or resources. They do. We remain convinced that university outreach efforts and other external resources can play an important role in bringing about positive change in communities. However, outside help will be much more effectively used when the community is itself fully engaged, and if it can define the agendas for which outside resources will be used."*[30]

Working with the community, needs were identified and ultimately federal grant funding was secured to carry out many of those needs. As external funding was received to support community development initiatives, Auburn did not bring the largesse of these dollars back to the campus to support faculty research; instead, we hired individuals from the community to lead these initiatives and kept much of the external grant support in Uniontown.

### *Make a Commitment to Long-Term Engagement*

Excellent community outreach is not episodic; it is programmatic, research-based, and often long-term. Many communities and regions in which we often work in Alabama are beset with problems and challenges that have mounted over decades of benign neglect. As we develop partnerships with others in the State to try and ameliorate some of these conditions, we take a long-range view of our engagement. For example, due to ongoing funding shortages, Alabama's public school systems are constantly faced with inadequate facilities, outdated equipment, and insufficient teacher support services to accommodate the educational needs of students. It is not uncommon for Alabama students to lack up-to-date textbooks, attend schools with leaking roofs or broken windows, or be taught by teachers who are not receiving ongoing professional development courses to enhance their curricula and teaching techniques. To combat many of these problems, Auburn University has created partnerships with city and county schools across the State.

The West Alabama Learning Coalition is one of these partnerships. It was created to address issues facing public schools located in Alabama's Black Belt. The Coalition was founded on the belief that educational improvement and community and economic development are interrelated and interconnected enterprises. Through this belief it was determined that the best approach to addressing public school issues was to create partnerships between school districts, institutions of higher education, government and community agencies, businesses, and prominent community leaders. The Coalition is able to sustain itself by attracting grant support from foundations such as the Jesse Ball DuPont Foundation and by anchoring itself in the Dean's Office in the College of Education. Many faculty members in the College see this effort as an extension of their research agendas, and their involvement in it is counted as part of their workload. Because the issues addressed by the Coalition are widespread throughout Alabama, Auburn University will sustain this effort for years to come.

Another example of the University's long-term engagement strategy is an effort called the Interstate 85 Corridor Initiative. As the largest major research university in the State, Auburn is also one of the State's largest employers. But beyond providing jobs for many people, Auburn has not seen much of its research result in innovation and spin-off companies. The University wanted to do something about this.

Initially, the role of the University was one of convenor and leader of an effort to bring together eight municipalities, four counties, numerous universities, and the public schools along a 91-mile stretch of interstate to create a regional vision and economic development strategy. Now that the network of more than 200 leaders has been mobilized, the University will take on a less dominant leadership role. We will become an active participant and provider of research-based expertise to help drive the regional strategy. We see this project as a 20-year effort if we are to truly transform our region into one of high prosperity and economic competitiveness. We are committed to this effort as long as Auburn University sits smack in the middle of Interstate 85.

Institutions of higher education wishing to engage in meaningful, significant, and relevant community outreach have no choice but to form strategic alliances and partnerships. Residents of communities are no longer receptive to academicians as lone rangers who come into communities and prescribe solutions to social, economic and educational needs and conditions without involving the communities in the solutions.

Community partnerships are important because they serve as convenors of people and communities who might not otherwise come together to address significant issues or conditions they face. In rural Alabama, one of the most prevalent and ongoing problems is the racial divide. Due to generational and deep-rooted racial tensions that exist in several parts of the State, it is often extremely difficult for community residents alone to look beyond ethnic differences and work on advancing their communities. We have discovered that when Auburn University's faculty with expertise in race relations, sociology, political science, economic development, or architecture enter communities as a diverse group, they provide an excellent stimulus in getting communities to productively discuss these issues, while simultaneously focusing on strategies for community improvement.

There are many benefits of university-community partnerships. Given the keen competition for external grant support to enable universities to work in communities, universities must figure out how to sustain the engagement when funds dry up. The primary benefit of successful partnerships is that the process of moving towards sustainability is immediately put in motion. When residents, organizations, agencies, and local communities actively participate in outreach projects, the commitment to sustain the project is much greater than community projects that are spearheaded and conducted solely by academicians. As documented extensively in *Reinventing Government,* a book by David Osborne and Ted Gaebler, it is much better to empower communities than to merely serve them.

Successful partnerships also enhance student achievement by providing students with an opportunity to connect theory with practice. Students who attend institutions that provide them with opportunities to engage in outreach and service learning activities are able to experience firsthand how their respective areas of study are applied outside of academic settings. This type of student engagement promotes leadership development, character development, cultural and community understanding, and self-discovery.

Higher education in America has come a long way in 350 years. More and more, institutions see engagement with their communities as vital to the effective achievement of their tripartite mission. But if we cannot figure out ways to reward faculty who use their research to improve communities, I'm afraid this effort might remain on the fringes of what major research universities see as their primary mission – basic research. We have taken the initial step at Auburn to do this.

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# A Public Citizen: The Civic Role of an Educational Institution for the Betterment of Society

## The University of Texas-Pan American Office of Center Operations and Community Services (CoSERVE): A National Model for Economic and Community Development

*Osvaldo Cardoza and Gustavo Salinas*

The University of Texas-Pan American (UTPA) is located in Edinburg, Texas, approximately twenty minutes from the United States/Texas-Mexico border. UTPA is an accredited, public institution with a student enrollment exceeding 15,000. With 85 percent of its enrolled students of Hispanic descent, UTPA is the university with the largest Hispanic student enrollment of any four-year institution in the continental United States.

Committed to excellence both on and off campus, UTPA offers forty-five bachelor's degrees, masters degrees in twenty-five fields, a doctoral program in International Business, and a cooperative Educational Leadership doctoral program with the University of Texas-Austin. It also seeks to complement its academic programs by reflecting and responding to the international, multicultural, and multilingual needs of the surrounding community through public service.

### *Civic Role in the Community*

The University's civic service is made possible through CoSERVE. CoSERVE (Office of Center Operations and Community Services) is UTPA's institutionalized public service arm developed to improve the quality of life for the community and to foster innovative solutions to economic challenges unique to the South Texas-Mexico border. CoSERVE, under the auspices of UTPA's External Affairs Division, is comprised of twenty-three centers that provide education, training, and professional expertise to local, state, national, and international communities. The office is staffed by a team of faculty, professionals, and students.

Established in 1986, CoSERVE started as CEED, the Center for Entrepreneurship and Economic Development, with a grant from the Meadows Foundation. Through CEED, UTPA sought to support the region's economic development efforts by sharing its academic resources. Over time, local needs spurred the organization to branch out and to develop specific programs to address those needs. CoSERVE is now an umbrella organization with twenty-three centers involved in various facets of economic and community advancement, such as: small business development, housing, personal financial literacy, government procurement, agricultural development, U.S./Mexico border economic studies, nonprofit resource development, international trade, English language instruction, local government strategic planning, industrial development, and census demographic information. Essentially, through numerous collaborations with community nonprofit, public, and private organizations, and with local, state, and federal entities, CoSERVE acts as a catalyst to stimulate economic growth, create jobs, and improve the standard of living for all citizens.

### ***Dual Purpose of Citizenry***

Engaging an educational institution in the community is essential to the positive development of the community, as well as for the institution itself. UTPA recognizes that the purpose of education is not only to instruct individuals on facts and figures, but also to prepare them to address society's current and emerging questions or needs so that they might help build a better quality of life. For the institution, engagement provides insight into possibilities for future learning and can equip individuals with the ability to respond to community challenges.

> *"Traditional knowledge is only the collective memory of where that leading edge has been. At the leading edge there are no subjects, no objects, only the track of Quality ahead, and if you have no formal way of evaluating, no way of acknowledging this Quality, then the entire train has no way of knowing where to go. You don't have pure reason…you have pure confusion. The leading edge is where absolutely all the action is. The leading edge contains all the infinite possibilities of the future. It contains all the history of the past."*[31] – Robert M. Pirsig

For CoSERVE, involving itself in the community allows a better understanding of the realities faced in the region and helps us capture that "leading edge." UTPA is located in a region with significant needs, and to address those needs effectively, it must act as a citizen of its community. As a citizen, CoSERVE programs and staff involved in community projects gain insight through practical application. Through a fusion of classroom instruction, fieldwork, and experiential learning, the University is actually exemplifying citizenry as well as cultivating aware and responsible citizens. Ultimately, it produces a truly learned individual, one with real-world experience and the intellectual capacity to take ownership and responsibility to improve his or her community. Concurrently, the University makes improvements in its understanding of how to better educate its students, staff, and faculty, as well as how to better develop its own academic programs necessary for building the skills of future citizens of the local community. Essentially, it is this "theory and practice" coupling that has made UTPA a pioneer educational institution.

### *CoSERVE Partnerships*

UTPA lends its academic resources to community development, thus taking part in improving the standard of living for local citizens. It is a twofold advantage, however, as the University also contributes to faculty development by assessing its very own scholastic value to solving systematic issues in the area and validating itself as a true institution of higher learning. This benefit is largely made possible through community partnerships.

Community service is an integral party of UTPA's mission. In fact, CoSERVE's success in the community can be attributed to its very institutionalization at UTPA. By effectively utilizing University resources and private and public funding, and by establishing an organizational mission, CoSERVE has been able to form and cultivate relationships with various community organizations. By merging with local, state, national, and international programs, CoSERVE has attained mutually shared goals with its established partners and set numerous agendas for solutions. These collaborations often decrease duplicate services and enhance the limited resources of partners in the public service sector.

A few of CoSERVE's partners and/or funding sources include: U.S. Department of Commerce; U.S. Department of Agriculture; U.S. Small Business Administration; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; U.S. Census Bureau; National Institute of Standards & Technology; National Telecommunications & Information Administration; National Aeronautics & Space Administration; U.S. Department of Energy; Mexico's Instituto Nacional de Estadistica Geografia E Informática (INEGI) & the Secretaría de Economía; Levi Strauss Foundation; SBC Foundation; Fannie Mae Foundation, Exxon Mobil; Duke Energy; Dell Computer Corporation; IBM; The Boeing Company; Pfizer, Inc.; Lockheed Martin; public officials; regional chambers of commerce and economic development corporations; community development corporations; and various other nonprofit and private organizations.

### *Features of Successful University-Community Partnerships*

In due course, CoSERVE has found that certain features augment the success of partnerships. The most significant are:

- **Communication –** Open communication between or among partners is essential to the planning and implementation of services. This allows for input, direction, and innovation to address past, current, and future issues. For example, one CoSERVE center works closely with local housing programs to offer home-buying seminars. Constant communication among partners is necessary in order to provide the right information to clients on homeownership.

- **Collaboration –** Collective efforts enhance the efficient use of resources, allowing a broader depth and better reach of services to citizens to be met. For example, CoSERVE works closely with chambers of commerce in various cities. Through their chamber membership, CoSERVE is able to reach numerous small business owners with business training services.
- **Support –** Partnerships and programs must receive support from local leaders in order to come to fruition and to be maintained. Support can be financial, in-kind contributions, volunteerism, letters of support, etc. For instance, CoSERVE works closely with state and congressional representatives in securing funding and support from state and federal agencies to service their constituencies.
- **Flexibility –** The ability to adapt to changes in the environment is imperative to partner relationships due to the fact that each respective party has differing accountability standards with distinct reporting requirements. CoSERVE manages programs under several federal agencies and co-sponsors various projects with community resource partners. Not only does CoSERVE report to the funding agency, but it also must be flexible in meeting resource partner needs in implementing services, while maintaining its own requirements.
- **Vision –** Through engagement, CoSERVE and community partners are typically the front line to issues in the community. This insight automatically creates foresight for positive change when paired with community resources. For example, CoSERVE has involved itself in empowering residents of "colonias" (poverty-stricken areas along the U.S.-Mexico border) through basic skills education, counseling, and other services. Over time, CoSERVE has been instrumental in providing services such as financial literacy and homeownership through joint efforts with cities, counties, and nonprofit organizations.

As the environment in the Rio Grande Valley is always changing, it is necessary to adapt to it and respond with the necessary assistance to improve the health of the community. At this time, CoSERVE has the following twenty-three centers under its umbrella:

- Rural Cooperative Development Center (RCDC) – provides business training and technical assistance to existing and start-up rural cooperatives in the South Region.
- Center for Border Economic Studies (CBEST) – provides policy-oriented research on regional economic development and trade; the labor market and immigration; health and environmental policy; and information technology in the border region.

- International & Workforce Development (IWD) – provides educational opportunities for area business and industry, professionals, government agencies, public and private schools, universities, and the general public through high-quality training programs.
- Census Information Center (CIC) – makes census information available to underserved communities.
- Center for Entrepreneurship and Economic Development (CEED) – serves as a catalyst for business and economic development, job creation, and income growth through the provision of a broad range of education and technical assistance targeted largely to economic development organizations.
- Center for Local Government (CLG) – improves the effectiveness and responsiveness of local governments in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas by providing an array of educational programs, applied research, and other services.
- Center for Manufacturing (CM) – works with area manufacturers to improve the manufacturers' operation and profits through implementation of technologies and techniques that produce high-quality products on time and with less cost.
- Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) – develops model partnership programs for enhancing sustainable economic and community development in "colonias" and rural areas.
- Data and Information Center (DISC) – increases the availability and accessibility of demographic census data and other information to data users.
- EDA University Center (EDA) – through technical guidance, assists distressed communities in achieving their long-term competitive economic potential through a strategic investment of resources.
- English Language Institute (ELI) – provides English language instruction to students, professionals, and other individuals whose first language is not English.
- Industrial Partnership Center (IPC) – assists manufacturers and suppliers in qualifying as vendors in a global manufacturing environment.
- International Trade & Technology (ITT) – globally promotes the region and state as an international commercial center.
- Mexican Business Information Center (MBIC) – aims to be the leading provider of Mexican data and information along the U.S.-Mexico border.
- National Center for Excellence (NCE) – serves as pilot program of education and training on rural poverty issues.
- Project FORGE (FORGE) – provides rural South Texas farms and ranches with business technical assistance and support.
- Small Business Development Center (SBDC) – offers quality business counseling and training.
- South Texas Minority Business Opportunity Committee (MBOC) – plans, coordinates, and delivers available resources to increase procurement contracts and international trade for local minority businesses.

### *Impact of Involvement*

The University of Texas–Pan American is not a stand-alone institution, but a product and manufacturer of the very area it serves. It does not exist in a vacuum or deem itself an "ivory tower" and untouchable. Indeed, it recognizes itself to be a citizen of the community, both vulnerable and responsible to its environment.

Involvement in the community is the most reasonable way to evaluate and respond to the needs of the region. The Rio Grande Valley is dynamic and underserved to an extent that any impact, negative or positive, will affect all of those who inhabit the region, including the University. It is then crucial for members of the community, like the University, to take an active role in securing the overall well-being of local neighborhoods.

CoSERVE has led the way in community involvement. Indeed, it is commonplace for CoSERVE to take a leadership role in addressing issues critical to the livelihood of its surrounding communities. Through academic guidance, practical application, and community partnerships, CoSERVE has made a great impact in the South Texas Rio Grande Valley. In turn, the University has also made impressive strides in its academic capacity due to its engagement in the area. Some examples of these results include:

- **Employment –** The Rio Grande Valley suffers from double-digit unemployment. Over the past eighteen years, CoSERVE has been instrumental in job creation by helping to develop businesses with employment capabilities in the area. Since 1986, 10,000 new jobs have been created, reducing joblessness and stimulating further buying power.
- **Investment –** Regionally, the area's per capita income is below the U.S. average. The percentage of persons living in poverty is typically double that of the national average. Over the years, CoSERVE has actively participated in generating over $100 million in private and public investment in the area to spur economic growth and raise the standard of living for local citizens.
- **Health –** Due to the poverty of the region, many of its residents lack proper health care and depend largely on public welfare for medical assistance. CoSERVE scholars conduct policy-oriented health-related research and make this information available to policy-makers, business leaders, government officials, academics, students, and the border community in order to foster informed decision-making.
- **Empowerment –** In order to meet the needs of an underserved region, CoSERVE establishes partnerships by recruiting organizations and members of the community to build engagement and responsiveness. Community Advisory Committees are an integral element of many centers under CoSERVE. As such, involved citizens and organizations feel a vested interest in the success of community programs and feel empowered to make a difference.

- **Capacity –** Grassroots learning is almost inevitable in an area with such immediate needs. Both the University and its partners receive first-hand knowledge when dealing with community issues, making their learning much more valuable. A CoSERVE Ph.D. student tied applied research on housing projects to her dissertation, thus amplifying her scholastic work with real world experience. HESTEC, a CoSERVE conference for Hispanic students following a course of study in engineering and science, provides real insight into actual careers available to under-represented minorities. CoSERVE M.B.A. students work hands-on with small business owners that need technical guidance to operate their business, thus putting their learning to the test. Due to this engagement, many of these students stay on to become permanent employees and resources to CoSERVE.

### *Impetus for Civic Duty*

> *"Private charities as well as contributions to public purposes in proportion to everyone's circumstances are certainly among the duties we owe to society."*
>
> – Thomas Jefferson

The University of Texas-Pan American defines itself as an institution committed to providing an environment of academic freedom in which faculty and staff engage in teaching, research, and service. The results of that research and creativity are shared with the general public through performance, presentation, publication, and public service activities.

As an institution of higher learning for its community, UTPA realizes that a quality education is largely bound by the results of its very application and the value it brings to the surrounding community. By involving itself in community service, the University itself has learned, and keeps learning, that civic duty is much more than an obligation, but is necessary for qualitative advancement. True knowledge is imparted not only through books, but also through experiencing and responding to real situations in the present, thereby creating citizenry. Characteristics like listening skills, respect, adaptation, compassion, understanding, acceptance, and experience are competencies for citizenship that can only be learned through practice.

Hence, the "front door" to the University is not just on campus, in lectures, or in a book, but in every point of contact where knowledge may be shared between the University and the community for the betterment of society. Every relationship created, whether it is with an organization, a student, a public leader, or a community member, must be nourished and seen as an opportunity for progress.

Education is ongoing and thus its composition must always be put to the test. Some test results may be negative, while others may be positive; the outcome can lead to produce learning and improvements. One positive outcome for the University of Texas-Pan American is its continuing ability to refute the theorem that "those who can, do and those who can't, teach." Clearly, the positive results stemming from UTPA's application of knowledge toward public service point to the falsehood of this maxim. Indeed, it is only one of the many ideas that UTPA has set out to analyze, test, and improve, as should be the ongoing purpose of any educational institution.

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# A PARTNERSHIP THAT'S MAKING A DIFFERENCE: THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA'S WEST PHILADELPHIA INITIATIVES

*Judith Rodin*

Benjamin Franklin once observed that no sailing ship is ever designed, built, and captained by a single person. Franklin would have understood that in many distressed urban communities today, success will depend on the work of many, including local institutions – universities, in particular – that are willing to roll up their sleeves and work alongside their neighbors.

A belief in active corporate citizenship and enlightened self-interest formed part of the genetic material that Franklin passed on to the many institutions he founded, including the University of Pennsylvania. He would have understood immediately why it is so important for Penn and a growing number of urban research universities, which typically are the largest employers in their cities, to invest their intellectual, financial, and social capital in restoring their inner-city neighborhoods.

Franklin saw no inherent conflict or tension between doing well and doing good. In his "Proposals for the Education of Youth in Pensilvania," Franklin declared that fostering an "Inclination join'd with an Ability to serve Mankind, one's Country, Friends and Family should indeed be the great Aim and End of all Learning."

When pursued vigorously and simultaneously, the two missions – developing the inclination to do good and the ability to do well – merge to help form a more perfect university that educates more capable citizens for our democracy.

### *Penn's Daunting Challenge*

For most of its history, Penn has been deeply engaged with urban issues. But it's in the past decade that we have found new ways to *apply* our intellectual and financial resources toward the transformation of our own back yard. In revitalizing our West Philadelphia neighborhood, we found our true calling as an urban research university. We assumed roles and risks that no other university had ever taken on. We demolished walls that kept Penn and our neighbors from forging nourishing connections with one another. We created a model for urban universities to become the catalysts for neighborhood transformation.

When I returned to my hometown and alma mater in 1994 to assume the presidency of the University of Pennsylvania, I knew we were blessed with the academic strengths, resources, and history to be one of the premier teaching and research universities in the world. At the same time, I was acutely aware of the deterioration of the West Philadelphia neighborhood at Penn's doorstep. By the early 1990s, our University City neighborhood – a once-dynamic and gracious community of magnificent Victorian homes and lively diversity – had fallen on hard times. The community had grown poorer and more dangerous, with one in five residents living below the poverty level. Crime had risen significantly. The streets were littered with trash, and abandoned homes and buildings became canvasses for graffiti artists and business addresses for drug dealers. Three local elementary schools ranked at the bottom in state-administered math and reading tests.

Not surprisingly, shops and businesses were closing, pedestrian traffic was vanishing, and middle-class families were leaving. And despite the many individual efforts of faculty and administrators to reach out to the community, residents by and large still felt that Penn had turned its back on the neighborhood.

Could a university so alienated from a deeply distressed neighborhood at its doorstep continue to grow and prosper? That was the fundamental question we faced. While some counseled that the problems were intractable, others encouraged Penn to take a leadership role in revitalizing the neighborhood as a matter of enlightened self-interest.

### *Taking an Institutional Leap of Faith*

During the early months of my presidency, I found myself persuaded by the latter perspective. I saw that investing in the neighborhood would pay academic dividends for Penn, and that this wasn't a zero-sum game, in which Penn would have to ransom its academic future to improve the fortunes of the neighborhood. I believed that for Penn to flourish academically, our neighborhood had to flourish as well.

Moreover, I felt strongly that we had an example of integrity to set for our students. The state of the neighborhood was our business. How could we educate and exhort our students to contribute to society if we did not offer them an institutional example of positive civic engagement? If Penn could make discoveries that saved lives and drove the global economy, then surely we had both the capacity and moral obligation to use our intellectual might to make things right at our doorstep.

However, it was one thing to support and recognize the great efforts of faculty and staff to take incremental measures to solve West Philadelphia's problems, if it fit within their research purview. But to offer to take the lead as an institution in redeveloping a distressed neighborhood that disliked us, and assume an unprecedented level of financial and social risk? That was a different story.

Yet, the neighborhood was in crisis, and only Penn had the capacity, the resources, and the political clout to intervene to stabilize the neighborhood quickly and revitalize it within a relatively short time period.

### *Terms of Holistic Engagement*

So, we created a community development agenda in which we would strive to rebuild West Philadelphia's social and economic capacity by simultaneously and aggressively acting on five interrelated fronts:

- We would make the neighborhood clean, safe, and attractive with a variety of new interventions.
- We would stimulate the housing market.
- We would spur economic development by directing University contracts and purchases to local businesses.
- We would encourage retail development by attracting new shops, restaurants, and cultural venues that were neighborhood-friendly.
- We would improve the public schools.

I want to stress the point about our integrated approach. Many urban and other universities had taken action on one front or another, or had approached these issues sequentially. None had attempted to commit to intervening holistically on all fronts at once.

We also made certain explicit commitments about what we wouldn't do.

- First, we would never again expand our campus into residential neighborhoods. We would only expand to our east, which was made up entirely of abandoned buildings and commercial real estate.
- Second, we wouldn't act unilaterally. Instead, we would candidly discuss what we could do with the community, and we would operate with transparency.
- And third, we wouldn't promise what we couldn't deliver. Instead, we would limit long-term commitments to promises we knew we could keep – and we would leverage our resources by stimulating major investments by the private sector.

In my mind, nothing short of a revolution would do. We reoriented the entire administrative culture at Penn toward transforming the University and the neighborhood simultaneously. To accomplish this, the leadership of Penn would take responsibility for directing and implementing the West Philadelphia initiatives. To underscore this commitment, our trustees formed a standing committee on neighborhood initiatives, equal in status to committees on university finance, development, and others.

### *Stabilize First, Proceed Directly to Growth*

To make the neighborhood cleaner and safer, we strengthened our Division of Public Safety by hiring more police officers and investing in state-of-the-art technology. We also created a University City special-services district (UCD) that employs safety ambassadors who walk the streets and support campus and city police, and trash collectors who supplement city units. These were welfare-to-work participants, thus contributing to another social action goal.

In addition, we partnered with neighborhood residents, the electricians' union, and the local electric company to install fixtures to uniformly light the sidewalks of 1,200 neighborhood properties. Not only did these efforts create a brighter and cleaner neighborhood, which attracted more and more foot traffic, but by requiring whole blocks, rather than individual homeowners, to commit, we encouraged a revival of community associations, block by block.

This, in turn, led to greening projects – such as the planting of 450 trees and 10,000 spring bulbs and the creation of four public and three children's gardens – which set the stage for the dramatic transformation of the major neighborhood park from a dangerous drug-infested space riddled with broken glass and condom wrappers into a thriving recreational venue for children and the locale for a weekly farmer's market.

Along with making University City cleaner and safer, Penn had a major initial impact on housing, which itself had become a clean and safe issue. We began by acquiring twenty abandoned properties in strategic spots throughout the neighborhood, rehabbed them, and sold them to the public. We weren't seeking a profit on these homes. Rather, we were seeking to build capacity by stabilizing blocks and promoting home ownership.

### *Penn Becomes a Private Developer*

We also stepped up our efforts to encourage more Penn affiliates to move into the neighborhood. But to make the neighborhood more attractive to residents, students, and visitors alike, we needed to provide retail and cultural amenities and engineer radical improvements in the public schools. We resolved to plan and build a public school, and we chose to undertake two large-scale mixed-use retail development projects in hopes that major anchors would bring shops, restaurants, theaters, and ultimately private investment and private development to University City.

Along one largely deserted stretch on Walnut Street, we built a 300,000-square-foot project that included a luxury hotel, a beautiful new Penn bookstore, public plazas, and a raft of stores and restaurants. At the periphery of the campus, we bought out existing leases to make way for a 75,000-square-foot project that included a state-of-the-art movie theater and a very desirable food market – two amenities that our neighbors told us were desperately needed.

Now, scores of new shops that run the gamut are opening throughout the neighborhood, while a key commercial corridor bustles with art galleries, performance spaces, and an international restaurant row that reflects the dynamic cultural diversity of University City. Thousands of people – from the Penn community, from the neighborhood, from all over the region – are flocking to shops, restaurants, and cultural venues that came into being as a direct result of Penn's decision to redevelop a dying commercial core into a thriving, productive asset.

Having large crowds on the streets has made the neighborhood safer and much more exciting. It's been a shot in the arm for the local economy. And it has finally made University City attractive to outside private developers.

But this wasn't just about building and attracting amenities. This was also about building sustainable economic capacity back into the neighborhood by providing new opportunities for local businesses and job growth among neighborhood residents. Toward that end, we required that our construction projects create substantial access for women and minorities to the trades. We invested in small businesses that created opportunity for welfare-to-work recipients and other members of our local community. And we redirected a portion of our purchases toward West Philadelphia vendors. In seven years, we have purchased $300 million in goods and services from local businesses. And we are receiving incredible service.

These interventions have been remarkably effective in revitalizing the neighborhood. Over a seven-year period, crime has fallen 31 percent. We've added more than 150,000 square feet of new retail inventory, with 25 new stores opening over the past four years. We've encouraged the creation of thousands of new jobs for local residents. Thanks to a partnership with Citizens Bank, more than $28 million has been made available to local nonprofit community development groups, for-profit developers, small businesses, and homeowners.

Perhaps the most intriguing statistic of all is the population change. While Philadelphia as a whole has seen its population decline by 4.5 percent over the past five years, University City has seen an increase of 2.1 percent.

### *The Last Piece of the Puzzle: An Excellent Public School*

Everything else we did made University City a much more enticing place to visit. But if we wanted to make the neighborhood more attractive for families, we had to improve public education. Yet, we could not have even begun to transform the schools had we failed to build safety, life, and economic capacity back into the neighborhood. We were also building and fostering relationships of trust among all our neighbors to forge a community of shared values – a community in which we all would learn, and grow, and flourish together.

This was the context in which we resolved to do something substantial and dramatic to improve local schools. As much as Penn had worked in the past to improve the learning environment, we faced some hard facts. Children from low-income families by and large were trapped in struggling schools. Their parents had no choice and little hope of seeing their children receive a good education.

Middle-class families with school-age children in University City did have a choice: they could send their children to a private school or move to the suburbs. What was it going to take to give children from poor families a reason to hope, and middle-class families a reason to stay and become truly vested in the neighborhood?

The answer would become clear to a large number of stakeholders: an excellent new school. We chose to reach for the brass ring and create a Penn-assisted, inclusive neighborhood public school whose enrollment reflected the broad diversity of University City. Only a school of this magnitude would capture the public's imagination and send the strongest possible signal to our neighbors that Penn was deeply committed to a sustainable future for West Philadelphia.

However, for this public school to model best practices and innovations to the benefit of other neighboring schools and ultimately transform urban public education, it had to involve the School District and the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers in a true partnership.

Nothing like this had ever been tried in the history of public education in America. First, it took a lot of persuasion and "gentle" arm-twisting to reach an historic, three-way agreement. It took another year of painstaking, thoughtful collaboration with educators and community representatives to come up with a design and plan for the school, and then another year of addressing the fears and concerns of residents – some of whom were suspicious of our motives, and others who didn't want to be left out in the cold.

But ultimately, with the great leadership of our Graduate School of Education, we were able to create a university-assisted, pre-K-through-8 neighborhood public school near Penn's campus that now accomplishes many things. It provides an excellent education for up to 700 neighborhood children. It is strengthening existing neighborhood schools by providing professional development and serving as a source of best practices. Because we linked the school to ongoing neighborhood revitalization, the school is also evolving into a community center that offers many benefits to the community: vocational, recreational, and adult education programs; cultural events; and a town hall where the community can come together to explore and debate issues and visions of the future. And by making University City more attractive to young families with children, the school has stabilized the neighborhood even further, while Penn continues to leverage our resources and investment in the new school to improve all local schools in West Philadelphia.

### *A Boost to Service Learning*

Penn's institutional engagement in the neighborhood has energized the academic climate on campus. Nowhere is this more evident than in the world of academic-based service learning. The Center for Community Partnerships has played a leading role in integrating and connecting the academic work of students and faculty with Penn's overall engagement in West Philadelphia. By developing more than 150 rigorous, problem-solving courses *with* public school teachers and students, Penn faculty and students have created a dynamic sense of community that gets everyone involved in learning and growing.

The courses have fostered an improved learning environment in the schools and more homegrown neighborhood economic development. We have also observed a heightened sense of citizenship among our students, many of whom have become leaders in the civic engagement movement.

One example is geologist Robert Giegengack's class in Environmental Studies, which teaches fundamental research in environmental toxins. It's a tough, basic science course. But members of the class also apply some of what they have learned, by helping public school students and their families, most living below the poverty line, identify sources of lead in and around their homes. The undergraduates work with students from a nearby middle school to test soil samples from their yards, dust and paint samples from their homes, and assist in mapping the risk of lead exposure in the neighborhood.

In addition, the middle-school students work with the undergraduates to design materials that are disseminated to parents and neighbors, alerting them to the dangers of lead exposure and advising them on how to decrease the chances of lead ingestion by the group most at risk of its ill effects: pre-school toddlers.

As a short-term program of outreach and information dissemination, the course has succeeded. Area school children are now more knowledgeable about the problem of lead exposure in their homes and neighborhood, and middle schools in Philadelphia now have a unit of study installed in their curriculum that focuses on the lead problem. Moreover, the findings of the program are enabling us to better understand the epidemiology of lead exposure in Philadelphia, where the data are available to city health clinics and private practice pediatricians for analysis and research.

Engaging the life of the classroom with the problems of the real world contributes to a happier, healthier marriage between town and gown, which can inspire our students to become contributing, creative citizens.

### *The Fruits of Partnership*

With strategic planning, brutal self-assessment, measurable implementation goals, guts, and some good luck, Penn indeed did transform its relationship with our neighbors, and in the process, we've all been happily transformed.

Ten years ago, few thought Penn had the guts to stick its neck out for its neighbors. Today, we realize that by putting our money and reputation on the line to help revitalize University City, the neck we saved might well turn out to have been our own.

**Judith Rodin**, *Ph.D. is President Emeritus of the University of Pennsylvania.*

## PART TWO

# *Engagement Through Civic Education*

# EDUCATING FOR CITIZENSHIP IN A DIVERSE AND INTERDEPENDENT SOCIETY

*By Nancy Thomas*

Not long ago, I attended a meeting with the senior commissioner of a state agency who, almost in passing, commented, "I just don't understand it. Our office has partnerships with [specific universities in the state] but not with _____," naming several other institutions. He continued,

> *Why is it so difficult to find the 'front door' of some universities? We can offer students opportunities to do research or experience their career choice. We have money – not much, but we could certainly write grant proposals together or otherwise pool our resources. We can provide faculty with research opportunities that might do some actual* good *in this state. I can't imagine that a university wouldn't want the publicity of students or professors learning while simultaneously doing a service to the region. I can't understand why this isn't easier.*

Working in partnership with and reaching out to communities is not new to higher education. Some longstanding forms of university-community engagement include continuing education and cooperative extension programs, faculty consulting, student volunteerism, and community-based service learning. Commentators and researchers in higher education, myself included, have addressed at length "what works" to structure and sustain community collaborations.[32] Yet despite knowing a lot about the design and characteristics of successful partnerships, we instinctively know that not all campuses are equal in the eyes of a community. Some have a more obvious "front door" than others.

Institutions that can be counted on to support mutually valuable community-university partnerships are those with an obvious commitment to educating for a diverse democracy and global society. One might look to an institution's mission statement and publications to understand its priorities. A better way would be to examine the curriculum and look for a comprehensive, integrated set of academic programs and structures that support education for the public good.

The purpose of this essay is to place the community-university partnerships movement in the context of a broader reform agenda to advance higher education's role in American democracy and society in general. Understanding this, community members can better assess an institution's readiness for effective collaboration. There are many curricular and co-curricular strategies universities can undertake that encourage students to be productive, responsible citizens and that inspire a sense of public purpose in faculty and administrators. This essay examines: (1) global and multicultural studies, (2) interdisciplinary studies, (3) learning communities, (4) interactive pedagogies, (5) ethics and moral reasoning, (6) engaged scholarship, and (7) deliberative dialogue. The centrality of these reforms to the academic program can indicate how seriously an institution views its role in democracy and, in turn, how committed it will be as an institutional partner in addressing social and community concerns.

### *Global and Multicultural Studies*

Nearly all institutions are immersed in efforts to recruit a diverse student population and increase retention by fostering an inclusive campus climate. Similarly, nearly all institutions provide students with opportunities to study abroad or otherwise study communities beyond U.S. boundaries. New scholarly approaches to diversity and international studies promote an integrated approach, one that educates for understanding diverse cultures and understanding cultures as diverse, developing intercultural skills, and understanding global processes.[33]

The events of September 11 and those since underscore the need to educate our students about cultures different from their own. This can best be accomplished by linking American diversity with non-American communities (e.g., understanding the Asian-American experience by studying the history, culture, and politics of Asia). Similarly, understanding cultures as diverse is also important. Bernstein and Cock advocate in favor of comparative cultural studies. They note, for example, "Both the United States and South Africa will need citizens who are not passive followers, who do not sit back and pin their hopes on charismatic leaders, who can find ways beyond apathy or violence to deal with elected leaders and the problems facing their countries."[34]

Creating opportunities for students to cultivate their intercultural competencies is equally important. This can be accomplished through creative living-learning arrangements, study abroad, intergroup dialogue, and foreign language study.

Alternatively, students can study particular issues (e.g., AIDS, poverty, terrorism) from a global perspective. "[S]tudents need to be able to discern, not how distant these world events are from their immediate concerns, but how their immediate concerns have threads which link them – their actions, their votes, their choices as consumers – to these world events."[35]

### ***Interdisciplinary Studies***

Several years ago, I directed an initiative for the American Council on Education (ACE) called Listening to Communities. ACE hosted eight public forums across the country, inviting local civic, political, and educational leaders to discuss the role of higher education in American democracy. Several participants expressed the view that student learning has become too much of a series of "disconnected, overspecialized fields" to be of much relevance to larger society. One participant reasoned, "*Real* solutions to problems are not specialized. *Real* solutions are interdisciplinary." Participants maintained that "higher education does our country a disservice by disconnecting specialties."

Interdisciplinarity is not new. "What is new," explains Deborah DeZure of the Center for Instructional Excellence at Eastern Michigan University, "is the intentionality with which these initiatives seek to promote connected learning beyond the discipline as a primary goal – pursuing knowledge that integrates and synthesizes the perspectives of several disciplines into a construction that is greater than the sum of its distinctly disciplinary parts." Reflecting the views of the Listening to Communities participants, Dr. DeZure comments, "Simply put: life is interdisciplinary."[36]

Most campuses are struggling with how to structure interdisciplinary studies. How courses are cross-listed, how interdisciplinary scholarship is recognized and rewarded, where faculty appointments are made, whether joint appointments are encouraged, how new courses are developed – these are a few questions interdisciplinary studies can raise.

At first, it might seem that the nuances of interdisciplinary studies have little to do with the establishment and sustainability of valuable institutional civic engagement. But interdisciplinarity really has everything to do with civic engagement if one views community-university partnerships as opportunities to study, experience, and address pressing public concerns. These problems are almost always interdisciplinary in nature. The structures in place at a university to support this kind of work are essential.

### ***Learning Communities***

Learning communities[37]are structured opportunities to live and study across disciplines. Usually, learning communities are team-taught and involve a small group of students organized around an ethical or social theme or issue. One might find learning communities within first-year experiences, senior capstones, and interdisciplinary studies such as women's studies. Learning community faculty are capable discussion leaders who facilitate learning. "Teaching as telling" is rare; active pedagogies such as service learning are the norm.

Learning communities provide students with an opportunity to *practice* what Richard Guarasci, President of Wagner College, calls "the arts of democracy."[38] The arts of democracy include critical thinking, problem identification and framing, collaborative problem solving and action, negotiating across difference, empathy, teamwork, and holistic thinking. These outcomes are usually on the list of civic skills or competencies many campuses seek to cultivate.

### ***Interactive Pedagogies***

Objections to the traditional model of "teaching as telling" are based both on what we know about student learning and on philosophical concerns. Studies estimate that in only a few months, students forget as much as 50 percent of course content that is communicated via lectures. Critical thinking – the ability to analyze, synthesize, apply, and evaluate – is most likely to result from interactive learning experiences. The philosophical objection goes something like this: there is something plainly objectionable to the notion that professors know everything and students know nothing. If the real goal of education not just the transfer of information but contemporary application of knowledge and cultivation of wisdom, then context is essential and students have much to contribute to a learning experience.

What probably works best is a combination of traditional teaching methods and interactive pedagogies. Those include:

- **Cooperative learning:** noncompetitive learning in which the reward structure encourages students to work together to accomplish a common end. Group work to study an issue or write a paper is a common example.
- **Collaborative learning:** more of an emergent process where the faculty member designs educational experiences and coaches the learning process along but allows the group to take collective responsibility for much of what happens in the process.
- **Service learning:** combines service and learning. Students receive course credit and the service experience is linked to course content. Effective service learning emphasizes context (understanding the political and social aspects of a community rather than studying the problem or organization in isolation) and reflection (through journal writing or portfolios).
- **Problem-based learning:** the learning experience is organized around an issue or problem, usually one of social, economic, political, or ethical import. Often these experiences are interdisciplinary in approach and intentionally bridge the gap between theory and practice.

- **Case method teaching:** learning that revolves around a fictional or nonfictional case that serves as the basis for discussion in the classroom. Case method teaching can involve students reading and discussing a pre-written case or having students study a situation and write up a case for discussion.

According to George Kuh, director of the National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE), students who take advantage of the academic resources available to them on campus make higher gains in levels of learning and personal development than those who do not.[39] And engaged learners are, the theory goes, more likely to graduate and become engaged members of other kinds of communities. NSSE measures student activities that point to students' level of academic challenge, time on task, and participation in educationally purposeful activities. Campuses that score well on NSSE are generally campuses that provide students with a broad range of interactive pedagogies and opportunities to engage in learning. In other words, a good NSSE score is evidence that a campus values its democratic mission.

### *Personal and Professional Ethics*

One can hardly open a newspaper without reading about corruption among the ranks of our political officials and business leaders. Universities, too, feel the impact of students who are morally on or crossing a line. Student cheating, hate crimes, vandalism, bad acts linked to alcohol abuse, and acts of incivility shock campuses. Researchers report that students are more interested in personal advancement and "being very well-off financially" than "developing a meaningful purpose in life."[40]

Campuses are responding with honor codes, programs on academic integrity, and other campus-wide efforts to foster a culture of honesty and integrity. What is probably needed is more of an "ethics-across-the-curriculum" approach that includes frequent analysis of and discourse about pressing moral issues.

### *The Scholarship of Engagement*

Despite the broad range of institutional types and missions, promotion and tenure on most campuses continues to be based on a "publish or perish" standard that considers only theoretical, discipline-based scholarship. Teaching and service are lightly weighted in the promotion process and, as a result, faculty members teach and do service in ways that take the least amount of time and energy. Redefining reward systems to recognize the scholarships of engagement or teaching, much less interdisciplinary research, can involve a complicated change process. Most institutions simply won't or can't invest the resources necessary for this level of reform.

Some less rigid approaches are taking hold. They include: an integration of the scholarships of discovery, engagement, and teaching; outreach scholarship such as qualitative, action, applied, and participatory research – research that draws from and is responsive to society; and interdisciplinary research. Those who perform this kind of research are viewed as public scholars, discoverers of new knowledge *and* its application throughout society.

### *Deliberative Dialogue*

Drawing from the work of community builders, educators are calling for deliberative dialogue, what Peter Levine at the University of Maryland's Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) defines as "improved talk." In *The Magic of Dialogue,* Daniel Yankelovich of Public Agenda explains the need for attention to the quality of public discourse:

> *Until recently, most people made the assumption that no particular skill is required to do dialogue. They assumed that dialogue is just another form of conversation and that we surely know how to carry out conversations without requiring a special discipline… But in the past decade, a growing literature has demonstrated that there is something unique about dialogue when it is done well…*
>
> *Today's diversity means not only that more people participate in decision making but that the new players bring different backgrounds and expectations to the table. Dialogue used to be simpler to do because we shared frameworks. When frameworks are held in common, there is no need to be self-conscious about doing dialogue. No special method is needed to arrive at mutual understanding. You just do it… But we can no longer "just do it." Reaching mutual understanding through dialogue doesn't come naturally to us anymore.*[41]

Deliberative dialogue – improved talk – can be structured in many ways, but approaches share some common characteristics. They are:

- An explicit **exploration of the values** of the participants and the organization or community in which the conversations are taking place;
- **Enough time** to study and understand an issue, with an emphasis on process and relationship-building, in addition to outcomes and action;
- **Trained facilitators** who guide the discussions, help establish ground rules, synthesize views, and keep the process on course;
- A progression that starts with **personal reflections and perspectives,** that draws from the lived experiences of the participants;
- Language clarification and the development of **agreement on the nature of the problem,** the reason for the conversations;
- A **commitment by the group to *study* an issue,** to seek out additional information, and to explore views that might not be represented in the room;
- A progression that moves **from talk to action,** with ownership remaining with the group or individuals in the group.[42]

One might argue that our campuses already feel strained by task forces, committees, and meetings. Yet most educators would agree that these groups sometimes behave in ways that are less than civil and that the results of their efforts are inconsistent at best. Modeling the behaviors we expect of our students could, in turn, impact how we as a nation do our business. Were higher education as an industry to make deliberative dialogue a *habit* in our classrooms and our internal decision-making processes and a *foundation* for community-university partnerships, we would affect the very core of the institution and society.

### *Conclusion*

The Listening to Communities initiative shaped my thinking about quality education in profound ways. I was struck by the comments of one community leader in particular who said,

> *We know that we can train social workers. We have good, for example, child welfare workers. But there is this absolute zone that I do not think has been thought through yet. Where and how is the preparation for people whose job is not social work in the classic sense as it is social and economic engagement of people? It is waiting to happen . . . It is crosscutting and interdisciplinary. It follows the trends of community builders. It makes the connection between human capital strategies and place-based strategies. Currently, the people who train people for jobs are not the same people who are doing, for example, affordable housing or welfare reform. They are in separate camps. One is accused of building a ghetto. The other is accused of only looking out for individuals who have no sense of community. The more advanced educational organizations are trying to break down that barrier. They are trying to do both.*

"Doing both" requires more than simply dabbling around the margins. This model implies significant reform – a culture shift and an examination of the institutional ethos. This kind of reform takes time, leadership, commitment, vision, campus-wide dialogues, and perseverance to implement these ideas in ways that make sense to students, faculty, and the public. Yet we know that the rewards are rich. Students who engage in the programs identified above are better problem solvers and critical thinkers. They have a sense of empathy and civic commitment. They are more likely to be life-long learners. They are creative, holistic thinkers. The rewards are there for faculty as well, for they will be inspired and renewed and feel a sense of public purpose.

Colleges and universities can inspire in students a sense of purpose and commitment to something larger than themselves. But doing so requires that they move beyond isolated, distinct initiatives.[43] A comprehensive commitment to educating for democracy and society – and commensurately its effectiveness as an institutional community partner – can be measured by an institution's integration of interactive pedagogies, global and multicultural studies, learning communities, interdisciplinary programs, ethics, engaged scholarship, and habits of deliberative discourse.

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# The Role of Higher Education in Preparing Undergraduates for Lives of Civic Responsibility

*Anne Colby, Thomas Ehrlich,*
*Elizabeth Beaumont, and Jason Stephens*

Most Americans know that the years 2003-2006 mark the bicentennial of the great exploration of the North American continent by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark. What is much less well known is the extent of the preparations for that great journey. Under the guidance of Thomas Jefferson, and while living in the White House, Lewis collected a wide array of tools and learned how to use many that were new to him, including chronometers, sextants, and other scientific instruments; medical equipment; and so on. With the help of some extraordinary teachers and mentors, including Albert Gallatin, Benjamin Rush, and others, he mastered the knowledge that he would need (in geography, botany, natural history, astronomy, commerce, and American Indian culture) and learned scientific techniques that would allow him to use his explorations to expand the boundaries of knowledge.

Before assembling a team, Lewis thought hard about what kind of men he needed and how he could maintain a cohesive corps. He collected the best existing maps, however incomplete they were, and out of his experience with those maps and the integration of the disparate bodies of knowledge he had studied, his plans took shape. These preparations helped to chart the course of the Lewis & Clark journey and the adjustments the team would make in response to unexpected obstacles and events. When the extensive preparations were finished and the explorers set out, their direction may have been only slightly different than it would have been with less preparation. But over many months of travel, the initial shift in trajectory and the continuing, responsive alterations no doubt led to a route distinctly different from the one they would have taken without such extensive preparations. The scientific, political, and cultural success of the expedition was critically dependent on lessons learned during the preparation period.

Those preparations are an apt metaphor for what a college education, at its best, can provide in preparing students for lives of civic responsibility. Faculty and administrators hope and expect that, like Lewis and Clark, their students will not just be traveling forward and trying to complete the journey but also learning and accomplishing valuable things along the way. They also hope that the college experience will shift graduates' life trajectories and give them new ways of responding to later experiences, as the explorers' preparation did, so that the shift in direction will be magnified over time, making the long-term impact of a college education substantial and influential.

Both personally and professionally, today's college graduates will set out to do many things in their lives. They cannot predict their many roles and responsibilities. But whatever else they do, college graduates should become active and morally responsible citizens of their communities. That is not only important for them, in order to lead fulfilling lives; it is also important for our country. If our democracy is to persist, then we must prepare the generation to come to be full participants. That civic engagement goal should occupy a prominent part of the "pre-expedition" preparation students undertake in college.

College is a critical time for "educating citizens," as we discuss in our new book by that title,[44]and from which material for this essay is drawn. In our view, moral and civic responsibility are inseparable. American democratic principles, including tolerance and respect for others, procedural impartiality, and concern for both the rights of the individual and the welfare of the group, are all grounded in moral principles. Likewise, the problems that the civically engaged citizen must confront always include strong moral themes – for example, fair access to resources such as housing, the moral obligation to consider future generations in making environmental policy, and the conflicting claims of multiple stakeholders in community decision-making. None of these issues can be adequately resolved without a consideration of moral questions. A person can become civically and politically active without good judgment and a strong moral compass, but it is hardly wise to promote that kind of involvement. Because civic responsibility is inescapably threaded with moral values, we believe that higher education must aspire to foster both moral and civic maturity and must confront educationally the many links between them.

Unfortunately, for many students, undergraduate education is simply a collection of separate courses and other experiences with little coherence. No less troubling, many campuses make little effort to structure undergraduate learning to ensure that civic learning is infused throughout the curriculum and co-curriculum or that it is an integral part of the campus culture.

### *The Components of Civic Maturity: Understanding, Motivation, and Skills*

What are the educational goals of this preparation for responsible citizenship? Civic maturity is not a unitary phenomenon. It is made up of three closely related and interactive dimensions: (1) understanding; (2) motivation; and (3) skills. Research shows that all three can be profoundly shaped by undergraduate experiences.

All three categories include several important elements. One that is central to civic understanding is developing a sophisticated grasp of key civic and political concepts. Students need to master and learn to apply knowledge in areas of critical importance for responsible citizenship at every level – local, state, national, and international.

In order to be civically engaged and responsible, students must not only achieve a deeper understanding of the issues, they must also be highly motivated to do something about them. This means their interests and values must reflect social and moral concerns, and these concerns must be central to their sense of who they are, to their identity. If they are to be engaged citizens, they must also have a sense of political efficacy, that is, a belief that what they think and do civically and politically matters. And they need long-term faith and hope to get them through the inevitable times when their well-intended actions do not seem to move them toward their goals.

Finally, we want our college graduates to be skilled in their civic and political participation. This means they need to learn about the particular mechanisms that are likely to be effective in tackling different kinds of issues and to have the practical skills they need to succeed. These skills include political discourse and other forms of communication, interpersonal capacities, and many specific skills of civic and political engagement, such as how to negotiate differences of opinion and move a group forward under conditions of mutual respect.

Those campuses that are most successful in promoting the civic responsibility of their students do so with a high degree of intentionality that links the curricular, the extra-curricular, and the campus climate in ways that are reinforcing. At too many campuses, connections among and between student experiences in these three realms are made, if at all, by students. At some colleges and universities, however, conscious efforts are made by administrators, faculty, and staff to ensure that students have multiple opportunities in all three domains to strengthen their understanding, skills, and motivation. A few words follow about each domain.

### *Promoting Civic Responsibility By Linking the Curricular, Extra-Curricular, and Campus Climate*

#### The College Curriculum

First, the curriculum should be center stage. Among undergraduates at every college and university are some who look for ways to contribute to something larger than themselves, who are inspired by moral ideals or passionate about social or political issues. They are primed to take advantage of the many ways a college education can deepen those convictions and bring them to a higher level of intellectual and practical sophistication and competence. Even so, not all of these students find their way to the right developmental experiences. For some, the inspiration will fade during college, giving way to narrower, more self-interested concerns so that their earlier passion becomes only a memory.

Other students – perhaps most students – come to college less interested in questions of civic involvement and social responsibility. They may have done some volunteer work and found it discouraging or unexciting; they may find politics confusing or even repellent. Reaching this group of students – awakening in them broader concerns and giving them a sense that they can grasp and contribute to the complicated realities of civic and political life – is at least as important as reaching those who are more immediately receptive. Weaving civic issues into the heart of the curriculum is the best hope of connecting with the hard-to-reach students and making sure that students already on an inspired path will not lose their way.

At Wayne State University, for example, the late Otto Feinstein, professor of political science, taught a required one-semester introductory American government course that drew 300 students each year and provided them with a powerful experience in political participation. In addition to lectures and readings, the course includes various activities designed to foster civic literacy and participation. In the Youth Urban Agenda component, students work together in small groups to create five- to ten-point political agendas. They then conduct background research relating to their proposed agendas; articulate the issues and show why they are important; identify which groups have a stake in a particular issue and how they can be reached; search for solutions, including public policies that effectively respond to the identified need; and develop a strategy for pursuing the agenda. At the end of the research phase, each student group elects delegates to an Urban Agenda Convention, which is charged with developing a common political agenda for Wayne State and the Detroit community. Students also organize public information campaigns around the issues, conduct surveys on key issues, and interview candidates for political office about their views on the Urban Agenda. A survey of college students who took part in these activities found that they showed significantly higher rates of voting in the state primary and were more likely to work in an election campaign and engage in other political activities than a comparison group of students who did not participate in the course's political engagement components.

Faculty development and logistical support are critically important to integrate civic concerns into the curriculum on a broad scale. Interested faculty who lack the substantive knowledge and pedagogical expertise they need to meet this objective can benefit from structured faculty development seminars, ongoing discussion groups, and connections with national programs that support civic education. One important issue, for example, is how best to avoid indoctrination while fostering civic responsibility in ways that encourage students to engage with both thoughtfulness and passion on controversial issues of civic concern.

Some faculty may say, “We can’t concern ourselves with the civic development of our students – our focus is on academic learning.” But our research has shown that incorporating moral and civic goals into the curriculum does not require a trade-off with more narrowly academic goals. In fact, we are convinced that the two strands of undergraduate education, disciplinary or “academic” and civic, are much more powerful when they are creatively combined. Part of the value of broadening the goals of higher education is that linking academic material to students’ lives and personal concerns and passions will lead to deeper understanding and more memorable learning of the course’s academic content.

The pedagogical approach used in civic education that has been subjected to the most empirical research is service learning, a strategy that ties disciplinary study and community service with structured reflection. The results of this research make it clear that service learning does enhance academic performance as well as many aspects of civic engagement. This is particularly true when it is linked to problem-based learning and collaborative learning.

## Extra-Curricular Activities

Second, extra-curricular activities are often even more important in the enhancement of student learning than curricular programs. Although curricular attention to civic development is essential, extra-curricular life is also rich with sites of civic engagement, and its impact on students can be transformative. Civic learning beyond the classroom includes both structured extra-curricular programs and activities and many aspects of the campus culture. Leadership programs, service activities, disciplinary, religious, and political clubs, and programs designed to foster communication and respect across diverse populations are most directly relevant to students’ moral and civic growth, but moral and civic learning can be incorporated into virtually any kind of student activity with sensitive guidance and support from faculty and staff advisors. That guidance is perhaps the single most important dimension of effective extra-curricular programs, and one that is too often absent.

On most campuses, extra-curricular activities are not intentionally designed with specific developmental goals in mind, nor are they coordinated with each other or with the curriculum. In contrast, we were struck by the special efforts taken at many of the campuses we chose in our book for site visits to think about the goals of their student life activities and to integrate the work of faculty and professional staff by linking academic learning with extra-curricular life.

A hallmark of good practice for powerful extra-curricular activities is careful involvement and oversight by faculty, student affairs staff, and administrators. Some students come to college knowing that they want to be involved in the theater or the student newspaper. But most are unsure. Campuses where students receive guidance not only about curricular programs but also about extra-curricular activities and how these programs and activities can complement each other are much more likely to find that their students choose a positive path that matches their interests and the institution's goals for civic learning.

## Campus Culture

Third, important elements in student life on every campus are located outside any formal program. They are part of the ethos of campus life and the campus's sense of community. Every campus has a distinctive culture in many ways, some quite conscious, others less so. At those we visited, we were almost always struck by some physical symbols of the mission and culture. For some, it is almost impossible to describe their distinctive approaches to civic education without mentioning certain features of their architecture, decor, landscaping, or other aspects of their settings. At Portland State University, for example, a bridge links two of the main buildings at the gateway to the campus. Across the bridge in bold letters is written, "Let Knowledge Serve the City," which became the mantra for the campus thanks to the energy and initiative of student leaders who proposed it. Another particularly dramatic example is Turtle Mountain Community College in rural North Dakota, which is housed in a building that powerfully reflects the college's commitment to Native American values. The building forms the abstracted shape of a thunderbird, and all the design elements reflect the college's efforts to integrate tribal culture into undergraduate education. The entrance is framed by a circle of columns, and within each is inscribed one of seven key teachings that are central to the Turtle Mountain Chippewa tribe. This physical representation of the school's values is mirrored in the curriculum, with many of the courses weaving learning about Chippewa culture with vocational and academic preparation.

In addition to physical symbols, institutional culture on many campuses was revealed in iconic stories that are told and retold in each new cohort of students and faculty. We heard stories relating to the institutions' founding or transformation, stories about heroes, and stories of transgression against cherished norms and areas where the boundaries of "right behavior" were contested. Incoming students heard those stories, often even before they arrived as freshmen.

Institutional attention is needed in all three realms—the curriculum, the extracurriculum, and the campus climate—if students are to become active, engaged, responsible citizens. No less important, students are much more likely to gain civic learning if there is conscious institutional attention to the reinforcing, interacting links among the three.

### *Lessons and Next Steps*

We saw many examples of exemplary campuses in terms of civic learning, which we document in our book. We found no institution, however, that gave campus-wide attention to that subset of civic engagement that involves politics, however the term is defined. It has been well-documented that undergraduates today are more ignorant about politics, more disengaged from politics, and more deeply cynical concerning politics than preceding generations, a trend line that has inched steadily downward since the 1960s. Many undergraduates see politics as corrupt and believe the problem of politics for hire is not fixable. We think that those of us engaged in higher education have an obligation to help those students gain the abilities, capacities, and the will to address these problems in our political system. Opting out is simply not an option for our democracy. Rather, the new generations of leaders, our students, need to reshape politics to meet the standards to which they and we aspire, and need to be prepared to accomplish that vital task.

In the course of working on *Educating Citizens,* we found many strong courses and programs focused on political engagement like the one at Wayne State. But our research convinced us that this arena needs much more attention, and it is now the focus of our Political Engagement Project at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. For this new project, we collected detailed information on many strong courses and programs, all of which share the explicit goal of educating for political understanding and engagement. We chose twenty-one that represent a wide range of disciplines, formats and strategies, student populations, and institutional contexts. In collaboration with the faculty and program leaders of these courses and programs, we are studying their impact on participating students.

Although the courses and programs address a wide array of goals and use many strategies to do so, we have identified four goals – such as political identity and efficacy – and five pedagogies – such as structured reflection and political action projects – for special attention. Together with the participating leaders, we are creating resources about the meaning and use of these goals and pedagogies for faculty and program staff wanting to educate for political engagement.

### *Conclusion*

It has become commonplace to bemoan a loss of moral and civic responsibility, particularly among young people, and to urge increased attention to civic education among students at every level. If the issue were viewed simply as one of information transfer, the role of higher education would inevitably be a modest one. This is no less true if the issue were seen solely as proselytizing students to pay attention to politics. We have much more in mind. With John Dewey, we believe that democracy and education are inexorably intertwined. This is not simply because our citizenry must be educated to choose responsibly our political leaders and hold them accountable. Much more important, a democratic society is one in which citizens interact with each other, learn from each other, grow with each other, and together make their communities more than the sum of their parts. Our common task is to translate that goal into effective educational programs.

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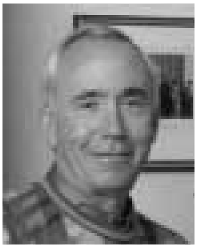

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# BROWN UNIVERSITY AND STUDENT CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: A RECENT GRADUATE'S PERSPECTIVE

*Claiborne Walthall*

University education stands apart from previous educational experiences. Not only are the level of scholarship and volume of work much more demanding, but students' motivations also make a pronounced shift. Where earlier schooling involved meeting the goals set out by others, university education requires a student to find an inner motivation, to begin seeing education as the means to some life goals. Though some people find this motivation earlier, in college it becomes necessary to have enough self-awareness to find a field to pursue, or at least a discipline that will provide tools for finding a vocation and involvement with one's community. University education focuses the individual on standards and knowledge, to be sure, but the larger goal is to help the individual develop in his own way, to become a unique person, contributing to the world in a useful manner.

I graduated from Brown University in 2002 and am still in the process of understanding the civic lessons of my college years. However, at two years' distance, I can already see my experiences much more clearly than when I was in the midst of them. In this essay, I begin with a discussion of Brown's open curriculum as a model of citizenship and community participation. Secondly, I turn to concentration (or major) requirements, the area where I see the most interesting approaches to civic engagement and the greatest opportunities for integrating public service and curriculum. Finally, I evaluate the considerable positive aspects of Brown's institutional effort to engage with the community, the Swearer Center for Public Service, while suggesting a few ways to expand its mission and continue the evolution of the curriculum.

### *The Open Curriculum*

Compared to the demands of papers, tests, and presentations – not to mention a demanding lifestyle outside of class – the search for what one "likes to do" might seem simple. However, experience has taught most of us that this selection process is anything but easy. Uninspiring high school classes may turn off many students from subjects that they actually find interesting. New subjects and disciplines present hundreds of new directions for curious students. Curiosity may have killed the cat, but it generally just exhausts the new college student. Discouragement, burnout, and confusion haunt first-year dorms after a few months.

Many colleges and universities combat these problems by instituting a core curriculum that provides a framework for students to sample various disciplines and a basis for pursuing a major. Other universities have moved away from this model, with Brown University leading the way thirty-five years ago. Then called the New Curriculum, the movement in 1969 from a core curriculum to a no-requirements "open curriculum" marked a distinct break from the past and shifted the entire burden of designing an educational program onto each student's shoulders. The open curriculum allows a student to take whatever courses she chooses and for which she is qualified. The open curriculum forces a student to be self-motivated and to challenge him or herself. This exceptional approach to educational design provided a unique lesson for me as a student, moving me beyond the demands of others and forcing me to identify and pursue the fields that interested me the most.

The essential feature of the open curriculum is responsibility. Students find an impressive array of choices in every semester and can enroll in just about any entry-level class. The temptation to sample each department pulls strongly on all but the most intellectually incurious Brown student, but some simple arithmetic shows that one could indeed try out each department, taking only one class, and remain at Brown for many years without earning any degree. The student's first, most basic responsibility is to find courses that lead to a degree in an area of interest and craft a program that results in graduation. With many departments requiring ten to fourteen classes for the major – out of a maximum possible 40 classes in four years at Brown – this is not terribly restrictive. However, planning ahead, especially with sequences of courses, is a key part of a student's responsibility.

The second tier of responsibility encouraged by the curriculum – and one that begins to have direct relevance to civic engagement – is that students must recognize when they need help and when to ask for advice. In the first year, Brown provides advisors for each student and requires that these advisors sign off on course selections. However, many advisees only seek out a signature, not developing relationships with these first year advisors. Departments also provide a similar arrangement, requiring students to secure the signature of the departmental concentration advisor before embarking on the degree path during their sophomore year. Often these concentration advisors become mentors, as happened in my case, but the most successful students also find professors and teachers from courses, campus activities, jobs, or religious groups who become informal mentors. These advisors become a true support network and provide great advice for those of us just starting out on a life path.

Brown provides a toolbox from which to craft most any life imaginable. The open curriculum taught me that "it's your life; do it right." For me, this was the greatest citizenship lesson the University offered. It makes the students the primary stakeholders in their own education, therefore earning us a stake in the community. If the curriculum is not working, then it is up to students to take action. If free speech is threatened on campus, take action. If the right courses aren't offered, take action. While it remains a venerable institution, Brown is remarkably open to change because the daily transactions between students, professors, and administration are not between customers, providers, and support staff, but rather interactions among members of a community.

### *Concentration Requirements*

Brown allows students great freedom in designing a curriculum to suit their interests, but it does not leave them completely on their own. In eight semesters, the University expects students to graduate with a degree from one of the departments.

The department in which I took my major, Urban Studies, was one of the more outward-looking in terms of community involvement. The descriptive literature given to prospective concentrators indicates that urban studies courses study characteristics of cities everywhere, but that the department specifically uses Providence as an urban laboratory. To fulfill this mission, the department offers a few in-house courses and seminars, but also cross-lists courses from many other departments throughout the university.

The in-house offerings include two seminars, at least one of which is required for the diploma, that compel department majors to seek out local resources and involvement. One seminar focuses on historic preservation, and the final project for the course is to examine some aspect of local preservation in detail, using local archives, agencies, and feet-on-pavement effort for research. The other seminar actually places students in various organizations and agencies for a semester-long internship. Many students become very involved in the municipal planning office, community garden movement, and mayor's office. These two seminars push students off campus and out of the library to experience their discipline on the ground and in the community they are studying. A number of students build on interests encouraged by these experiences and develop them into honors theses in their senior year.

The historic preservation seminar exposed me to the wide array of local resources Providence had to offer. I also got to know the folks "doing" preservation work. My project uncovered the history of a road project that had dramatically changed the relationship of one neighborhood to its waterfront. I also assisted a classmate in taking measured drawings of an historic structure slated for demolition. The drawings serve as a community record of the building. These learning experiences have remained with me and led me to pursue skills and classes such as Geographic Information Systems software (computer-based mapping and analysis). This skill led to my first job as a GIS analyst and trainer with a nonprofit conservation organization in Washington, D.C.

Several Brown departments offer similar courses under the umbrella of "service learning." For instance, a Spanish class might meet daily for language practice, but also require that students spend four hours per week working with ESL students. Discussing one such course with a fellow Brown graduate, she commented that this service learning course was one of the best educational experiences of her four years. Coming from someone who studied abroad, this was no small praise.

Service learning was Brown's effort to encourage students not just to take courses that advanced their career and life goals, but also give something back to the community. A few generations ago, a university student was expected to share knowledge, either as a teacher or professional. In today's job market, a college degree is almost a prerequisite for any job that pays above the minimum wage, and we have perhaps lost some of this greater expectation of students. Through service learning, students gain valuable real-world practice in their subject – nothing makes you learn a subject as well as having to teach it – and the community benefits for little to no cost from the intellectual energy and resources of the university. Both students and the community are served by a mutual interest.

The unfortunate aspect of service learning at Brown is that few departments actually required it. Urban Studies requires some involvement and facilitates many other opportunities if a student desires. Several other departments such as public policy and education have similar opportunities that place students in the community. But most departments have no requirements that encourage students to stray from College Hill. Certainly many students become involved in their own ways in various community projects, and many students take great advantage of the service learning opportunities offered to them outside of their concentrations. But it is one thing to offer service opportunities as one of many options; it is another thing entirely to integrate service into the concentration requirements. Requiring service learning would restore the natural link between receiving a formal education and having a greater responsibility to others because of the advantages afforded a university student.

Through the open curriculum's writing requirement, first year students with weak application essays are required to take a writing class in the English department. The requirement is in place because Brown felt that writing was a basic academic skill that no student could afford to be without. Without imposing any core curriculum, the University could quite easily institute a public service requirement. Just as writing is necessary to function in an academic setting, public service is a vital experience for a university student. Concentration requirements could preserve the freedom and flexibility of the open curriculum while at the same time demand attention to public service. In many cases, this would not necessarily add courses, but would strengthen the service learning program and mandate that all departments offer courses that include service learning components. In departments where the concentration requirements are numerous (for example, more than twenty courses are required for the engineering certificate), integrating service learning into those requirements would allow some students who would otherwise miss out to experience public service. Instead of adding some required "hours per week" of generic service, integrating public service with the curriculum itself would produce a well-trained and knowledgeable citizenry, as well as allow students to receive credit towards graduation for the good work they do.

### *The Swearer Center for Public Service*

Since 1987, Brown has offered an exceptional resource to its students in the form of the Swearer Center for Public Service. Located near the heart of campus, the Center occupies an entire building with thirteen full-time staff and about forty-five part-time student staff members. The Swearer Center's main function is to serve as a centralized location for interface between the student body and service opportunities and organizations. With Brown's varied and capable student body, the Swearer Center does yeoman's work indeed, connecting the Brown community with organizations in Providence and throughout the world. One of the important aspects of the Center's work is providing funding for service projects. Through a variety of in-house grants and grant-making support, the Center offers invaluable resources and opportunities on campus for students who use it.

The Swearer Center also serves as a clearinghouse for information and a meeting space. Through the part-time student staff, volunteer coordinators, and partnerships with programs throughout the University, the Center provides a variety of local service opportunities. These range from more traditional Habitat for Humanity and mentoring programs to providing support for students interested in starting their own local outreach initiatives. The Center maintains an excellent web site with a wealth of resources. Moreover, it is guided by a set of pedagogical principles that emphasize public service as a learning experience. In connecting the ideas of service and education, the Center tries to assure a rich educational experience for students as well as the community.

For example, one relatively recent effort to integrate learning and service is the University-Community Academic Advising Program. This initiative, designed for fifty first-year students, helps identify and connect students who are interested in public service through an advising process and seminar designed to support exploration of this interest. This is an admirable effort, and I hope that the principles of the program can expand to become a part of every student's experience.

Many of the Swearer Center's programs require a weekly commitment for a semester. For students able to make the commitment, this allows for continuity and stability in the programs in which students become involved. However, this commitment also limits the ability of many students to become involved. Campus life is never stable, and even a regular class schedule is at times stretched or altered to accommodate special projects or important events. Because the Swearer Center's programs focus on extracurricular service, many students are left out. Two possible strategies might address this shortcoming.

First, the Center might offer more one-day service opportunities. While no mentoring program would function effectively with this kind of commitment, a single-day or weekend service project could accomplish a great deal. Moreover, it is unlikely that a one-day event would detract from a semester-long program. In fact, it is more likely that a wider variety of students would be drawn in, especially those students who are not able to commit to a more regular schedule of service. Short-term projects would also serve to break the "cliquish" atmosphere that many students perceived surrounding the Center. When many programs require a "you're either committed for the long haul, or you're not needed" kind of decision, it gives the impression that there is only one kind of service, that which is offered by current programs. A better balance of short- and long-term opportunities would also allow more flexibility from one semester to the next for students. If during one semester a lighter class load allowed weekly service, then the student could take part. If the next semester a heavy class load only allowed for periodic commitment, then the student could still be involved. Providing a wider range of opportunities could increase investment of time and interest in the Center and also expand the definition of service on campus.

The other strategy would be to more fully integrate Swearer Center involvement with curricular service learning opportunities. While a printed list and web site guide of service learning classes was available while I was a student at Brown, it was not presented to students as part of the Course Announcement Bulletin. In a quick and admittedly unscientific survey of several fellow recent Brown alumni, most people's reaction was "List – what list?" While the Writing Center would send a salvo of reminder slips to our mailboxes several times a semester detailing its programs, the Swearer Center did little to publicize service learning opportunities. This is not to say the university students' hands need to be held through every step of public service opportunities. However, increasing the visibility of these opportunities, especially where they intersect with the curriculum, would yield great results.

### *The World Beyond Brown*

In sum, the public service opportunities at Brown were and are vast in number and scope. As with many universities, the energy and interest among students to participate in the local and world communities is very strong. After graduating from Brown, many students continue on into a variety of service-oriented activities. I followed this path, myself. The spring and summer of my senior year were spent in a fairly traditional job search: finding postings, sending résumés, and hopelessly expecting interviews that never came. As several months passed, I began looking at my skills and interests and making connections through friends and faculty. During my last semester, I had taken a course in Geographic Information Systems, or GIS, which is a computer-based mapping and database application. The course I had taken emphasized the use of this technology in public policy settings, requiring students to take on some real-world question as a final project. My enjoyment of this, as well as an awareness that GIS was becoming universally accepted as the urban studies and planning tool of choice, led me to seek out jobs that were using this technology in new and relevant ways. Through some conversations and legwork, I found an organization in Washington, D.C. that was working on conservation and urban forestry issues using this GIS technology. During the course of my employment there, I daily used the skills of that Brown course as well as the deeper lessons of service that I had been taught and that had become part and parcel of any activity I might undertake. Conversations with fellow graduates have yielded similar stories: a recent graduate whose brief involvement with a Swearer Center program led her to found a nonprofit organization in Providence called English for Action, or a fellow urban studies graduate whose thesis work on after-school programs led him to teaching in one such program in Boston after graduation . Brown continues to play an active role in many of these success stories as well, providing advising support, alumni networks, and even some monetary grants for graduates' service ideas. Overall, there is a culture of service that the University fosters, on and off campus, during a student's career and afterwards.

Brown is especially fortunate to have the Swearer Center, a well-regarded, funded and utilized center for encouraging and supporting good works. Any suggestions for improving Brown's civic engagement activities should be seen in light of the extensive service that many undergraduates are already doing. The main improvement would be to more fully integrate the learning process with public service. By seeing citizenship as a necessary component of the curriculum, universities can move beyond extracurricular service opportunities, to graduating students whose very lives are spent improving their world through the work they do.

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# PART THREE

# *New Perspectives on Civic Engagement and Higher Education*

# THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

*James Waits and Robert Franklin*

As institutions of higher education, theological schools are rather unique. And, we think that that uniqueness makes them interesting and exciting. More importantly, theological schools may have something valuable to contribute to the revitalization of civic engagement in America and beyond.

### *The Nature of Theological Schools*

First, a word about the unique nature of theological schools. On the one hand, they are centers of critical inquiry, and on the other, they are communities of faith and public service. Most of them reside comfortably within the larger academic community where the arts of teaching, research, and vigorous scholarly interchange are valued. But most also understand themselves to be "intellectual servants of the churches," a term coined by theologian H. Richard Niebuhr. As such, seminaries are institutional citizens of "two realms," committed to nurturing faith and to cultivating curiosity, skepticism, and wonder. At once, they are custodians of tradition and iconoclasts that critique traditions and practices that fail to liberate humanity. Far more interesting than watching 1,001 angels dance on the head of a pin is the fascinating way in which theological schools achieve coherence amidst the competing and often contentious dimensions of their complex identities, loyalties, and missions. Insofar as theological schools promote the dispassionate exercise of cold, critical reason in the pursuit of the truth along with the joyful expression of warm, passionate faith, they manifest a somewhat unique role in higher education. And, in a world where religious devotion often devalues science and reason and even commits horrors in the name of God, it is important to know that there are places where faith and reason work together robustly in the service of the good.

Of course, we know that most people have no idea about what goes on inside seminaries. Those of us who work at theological schools may be a bit like the folks Robert Louis Stevenson described as "practitioners of obscure arts." When researchers from New York's Auburn Center for Theological Education interviewed leaders from the business, civic, media, and other sectors regarding their awareness of the local seminary's mission, presence, and purpose, sobering responses ensued. Most business leaders regarded the seminaries as "invisible institutions" without a noticeable public profile. We realized that we had a serious PR problem and needed to tell our stories and better document the extent of our public presence.

In 2000, the Association of Theological Schools (the accrediting agency for theological education in North America) released its report of a major study to examine the public character of theological education. This project assessed the stance of evangelical, mainline, Roman Catholic, and university-related schools and their distinctive public roles and involvement. The writers of the study concluded, "Perhaps the most striking learning from the working groups was the diversity of ways in which theological schools relate to the public." Informed by the theological and religious traditions that shaped them, these institutions came to divergent conclusions regarding their public presence and mandates for involvement in the public sphere.

### *Differing Conceptions About How Seminaries Should Engage the Public Realm*

There is no consensus about how seminaries should engage the public realm. Some of our colleagues in theological education believe that the role of seminaries is to prepare spiritual leaders and to focus on personal and private dimensions of religion, eschewing the public realm and its compromises, controversies, and moral relativism. This is a species of "world rejecting" faith that invests little of its resources in the process of preparing believers to be effective citizens. Many forms of religious "fundamentalism" stand under this umbrella, and as long as they do no harm to others, we must acknowledge and respect their tradition. But, fortunately, it is not the only one.

There is also a "world transforming" tradition that invests its best energies in building good communities and promoting a just society. Here, we think of all the seminaries, churches and synagogues, clergy and laity who contributed positively to the movement for civil rights, protests against numerous wars, initiatives to control nuclear and arms development, efforts to reduce poverty, and countless other causes. Many of these expressions of "public faith" had a dramatic effect upon national, state, and local policies and practices. This is the tradition with which the authors identify and into which we have sought to socialize our students. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. may have had something like this in mind when he declared, "This hour in history needs a dedicated circle of transformed nonconformists. The saving of our world from pending doom will come not from the actions of a conforming majority, but from the creative maladjustment of a transformed minority."[45]

### *Thinking, Speaking, and Acting Morally: Building Inclusive Communities and Seeking Social Justice*

One of the great needs of our democracy at this time is an expanding body of citizens capable of engaging in the moral analysis of our national life. Moral analysis, deliberation, judgment, and commitment are essential for determining what is good, right, true, and worthy of our affirmation and loyalty. Attention to the moral dimension of politics insists that we inquire about how a policy or decision is likely to impact the lives of our community's most vulnerable members. Moral analysis creates new habits of the heart that prompt us to worry about the health of our national community when nearly two million citizens are incarcerated, eleven million children live in poverty, and thirty million lack health insurance. Seminaries that aspire to prepare students who in turn provide leadership for moral analysis serve the public good in a compelling but often overlooked manner. In many communities, our graduates are likely to be the only locally accessible examples of, and resources for, thinking and speaking morally. And, our hope is that local religious leaders use moral language and ideas in ways that promote inclusive understandings of community and cooperation between peoples who embrace differing moral and religious traditions.

Higher education in general, and theological education in particular, have a special role to play in educating the public to employ moral language and categories as they evaluate national and foreign policy and the well-being of the global community. By framing local, national, and international affairs in moral terms – using categories such as justice, reconciliation, stewardship, and social responsibility – seminaries provide the public with an alternative to the flat vocabulary of secular politics and the social sciences. Their advocacy of the common good, in distinction from a more narrow self-interest, represents a courageous expression of moral maturity. Moral immaturity is the habit of evaluating one's actions and opportunities solely in light of how they advance individual and group self-interest. Unfortunately, much of talk radio today reflects precisely the sort of moral immaturity that threatens our democracy.

In our post-9/11 era, it is incumbent upon all Americans to become aware of our nation's policies in relation to other countries. We should do this in order to hold government officials accountable for the policies and actions taken in our name, and also because people throughout the world believe that Americans are powerful people and are responsible for our government's behavior. Although the example is extreme, Osama bin Laden's "Letter to America" asserts the point in an effort to justify the murder of civilians: "The American people are the ones who choose their government by way of their own free will; a choice which stems from agreement to its policies…The American people have the ability and choice to refuse the policies of their Government and even to change it if they want."[46] Professors of ethics, theology, and religious studies provide alternative lenses for interpreting foreign policy and aspiring to create a just, international order where the dignity of all people is acknowledged and protected.

Morally mature citizens are capable of perceiving the interdependence of all humans. Many of the connections between peoples and cultures are obvious, but many others are not. Here again, most seminaries are committed to teaching students to build communities that are inclusive and that seek social justice. In a wonderful essay titled "The World House," Dr. King asserted this point in a way that makes it impossible to miss.

> *All people are interdependent…whether we realize it or not, each of us lives eternally "in the red". We are everlasting debtors to known and unknown men and women. When we arise in the morning, we go into the bathroom where we reach for a sponge, which is provided for us by a Pacific Islander. We reach for soap that is created for us by a European. Then at the table we drink coffee, which is provided for us by a South American or tea by a Chinese or cocoa by a West African. Before we leave for our jobs we are already beholden to more than half of the world… All life is interrelated. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly.*

In a world in which religion is increasingly a source of division rather than reconciliation, the seminary may be called upon to play a larger public role: promoting interfaith knowledge and understanding. As nations and communities become more religiously pluralistic, the potential for conflict increases. Religious differences easily spawn misunderstanding, and the absence of accurate information about other faith traditions may intensify that conflict. Too often, such ignorance underwrites prejudice and violence. The role of the seminary in extending its special expertise in creating conditions of understanding and community regarding other faiths is clearly an opportunity for public engagement of theological education. Here we cite the important work being undertaken by Harvard Divinity School professor Diana Eck and the "Pluralism Project" that is documenting the extent of religious diversity within American communities and offering hopeful examples of how inter-group conflict has been resolved and managed.

### *Theological Schools as Advocates of the Common Good*

Through the public work of board members, deans and presidents, and faculties and students, seminaries embody an approach to leadership formation that is informed by particular religious commitments but fundamentally aimed at serving the common good.

By their nature, theological schools are committed to the well-being of the entire community and promote values such as inclusiveness, participation, acceptance, equality, justice, and access. Theological students are schooled in these values and are sent forth to serve the public with these values and tools.

One way seminaries give testimony to these priorities is by their own institutional example. Theological schools typically embrace and excel in the difficult work of manifesting and managing diversity. Although our shortcomings have been numerous, our best energies have been devoted to creating environments in which students and faculty could demonstrate their tolerance and respect for people who are different. In the past generation, America has needed and theological schools have made great strides in providing concrete examples of thoughtful, religious people patiently and gracefully overcoming past prejudices in order to live with deep differences and to expand assumptions about who is welcome in our community. Most seminaries have done a good job of embracing racial, ethnic, gender, and class differences. Today, seminaries, churches, and the larger society are facing the challenges of how to respectfully include gay and lesbian community members.

We have suggested that theological schools can provide some of the competencies needed for a healthy democracy, such as the capacity to think morally, to hold government accountable to moral standards, and to promote the common good. We challenge these institutions to step up to the plate at a time of enormous public need to supply those moral goods. And, we call upon our partners in higher education to be open to exploring collaborative relationships with these custodians of moral capital.

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# HEAVY LIFTING: BRIDGING MAIN STREET AND COLLEGE AVENUE

*Carlyle Ramsey*

Are America's colleges and universities "common ground institutions respected by the public, private, and non-profit sectors"?[47] If the answer to this question is a resounding yes, higher education can indeed play a vital role in helping to address national and community problems, including community building and preparing students for engaged, responsible citizenship.

The issues cited above are part of the Pew Partnership's challenge to the higher education community, which is directed not only at the presumptive leaders, including chancellors, presidents, deans, and governing boards, but also at faculty and, of course, students. This is not to suggest that American colleges and universities have been derelict in pursuing a civic mission. However, given our current and future challenges, such as the continued fragmentation of families, the persistence of drug and alcohol abuse, racial divisions, economic problems, the so-called culture wars, and the loss of a sense of community (exacerbated by elements of the national media which thrive on the coarsening of manners and civility in American society), does higher education possess the resolve and resources with which to forge effective college and community partnerships which foster civic engagement and responsible citizenship?

Higher education tends to respond slowly to real-world problems due to the nature of the academy. We are expected to be reflective, deliberative, collegial, and oftentimes detached. Our critics argue that our detached and deliberative modus operandi prevents us from being proactive, entrepreneurial and even, paradoxically, visionary. For example, a recently published report by the American Council on

Education found that most American colleges and universities focus on the "traditional-age" student,[48]the 18- to 24-year-old, despite the huge numbers of adults flocking to the academy. The ACE report noted that "adult students (25 years of age and older) are becoming the new majority on campuses across the nation."[49] With the exception of community colleges, where the average age is about 28, and some comprehensive universities, our campus cultures continue to focus on the younger population. Yet, the ACE authors observed:

> *...due to dramatic shifts in the U.S. labor market, incessant advancements in technology, and the globalization of the U.S. economy, the education of adult students has become vital to the future of the 21st century America.*[50]

The healthy dialogue and debate over whether higher education should provide utilitarian, career- or vocation-centered skills and education or whether it should embrace the pursuit of knowledge for the sake of knowledge itself has been useful to the nation. Indeed, these conversations have been occurring almost since the inception of the republic. The passage of the Morrill Act in 1862, along with additional federal and state initiatives in the late 19th and early 20th century such as the Smith-Lever Act in 1914 and the National Defense Education Act in 1958 (specifically designed to promote the sciences, mathematics, and foreign languages in response to Soviet space exploration) are all examples of how the nation has sought to harness the intellectual and creative talent at our colleges and universities to solve major national problems. Now the Pew Partnership for Civic Change is challenging our colleges and universities to become an integral part of community problem solving efforts and to contribute in a greater way to the civic health of local, state, and national communities.

### *A Model for Success: The Rural Community College Initiative*

There are already successful models to adopt, the most impressive of which I have witnessed and experienced is the Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI). While it is called the "rural" community college initiative, the goals and the strategic planning process, Vision to Action, are perfectly compatible to non-rural communities. Conceived and sponsored by the Ford Foundation more that a decade ago, RCCI was (and remains in a slightly different format) a visionary and practical effort to deal with two overarching goals central to vibrant communities: expanding educational access and assisting with economic development. The RCCI was formally launched in the early 1990s with nine pilot community and tribal colleges located in some of the poorest regions in the United States. In 1997, an additional fifteen community and tribal colleges, including Danville Community College (DCC), joined the effort. The project was managed by MDC, a Chapel Hill, North Carolina-based nonprofit dedicated to advancing the South through strategies that enhance economic opportunity and building inclusive communities, from its inception to 2001. Currently, RCCI is operated by two regional rural development centers, at Mississippi State University (www.srdc.msstate.edu) and Iowa State University (www.ncrcrd.iastate.edu). Ford remains a part of the partnership; an additional sixteen tribal and community colleges have been added to the project.

RCCI COLLEGES[51]

**Alabama**
Alabama Southern Community College
Wallace Community College Selma
**Arkansas**
Phillips Community College
**Kentucky**
Hazard Community College
Prestonsburg Community College
Somerset Community College
Southeast Community College
**Mississippi**
Coahoma Community College
Meridian Community College
**Montana**
Blackfeet Community College
Fort Belknap College
Fort Peck Community College
Salish Kootenai College
**New Mexico**
New Mexico State University-Carlsbad
Northern New Mexico Community College
University of New Mexico, Gallup
**North Carolina**
Southeastern Community College
**North Dakota**
Sitting Bull College
**South Carolina**
Technical College of the Lowcountry
**South Dakota**
Sinte Gleska University
**Texas**
Laredo Community College
Southwest Texas Junior College
**Virginia**
Danville Community College
Mountain Empire Community College

Why could RCCI be a model for citizen engagement, community development, and civic renewal? Why community and tribal colleges? According to a 2001 MDC publication, rural community colleges are "uniquely positioned to be catalysts for increasing economic and educational opportunity in their communities." They are "common ground institutions, respected by public, private, and non-profit sectors."[52] MDC continued:

> *Compared to most institutions, [rural community colleges] are trusted by people across social classes. They can convene diverse groups of people to work on community problems; they can help create a collaborative civic culture, part of the foundation for community prosperity. They have the stature, the stability, and the flexibility to provide leadership for regional development.*[53]

RCCI has a history of success in creating a "link between economic development and access to education." This is particularly true in poor areas where "…low levels of educational attainment and high poverty are barriers to development that must be addressed directly if the economy is to thrive."[54] Recently, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) published a national assessment report of the Rural Community College Initiative, which documented the successes of the colleges and the communities served. In the executive summary, the authors concluded that the colleges "enhanced their own institutional capacities by institutional changing cultures, leveraging resources, and developing new leaders." The report further stated:

> *Over time, the college definitions of access and economic development broadened as they were pressed to think "out of the box," widen their leadership base, and develop deeper collaborations across their communities. With an expanded view of access and economic development, these colleges redefined their goals as educational institutions – and looked holistically at the relationship between the education and training of individuals and the development of wealth and well-being in their community.*[55]

Most of the RCCI colleges have transformed their internal college cultures and made dramatic differences in their service regions, as the AACC assessment report documents.[56] Moreover, the colleges, having become much more entrepreneurial, focus on four broad goals: expanding access, strengthening the workforce, assisting with economic development, and partnering in the vitally important area of community development. If a college is not effectively addressing the first two, it will never be a serious player in economic and community development. This is precisely why the RCCI model complements the Pew Partnership's challenge. Community renewal and engagement must encompass all of the goals cited above.

### *Danville Community College*

The RCCI experience has had a profound impact on Danville Community College. Several success stories stand out above many, one of which is the creation of neighborhood educational opportunity centers. The College has established seven access centers in the poorest neighborhoods or communities in the College's southern Virginia service region. Over the past five years, DCC has witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of citizens from the most distressed areas of the region matriculating at the College. Frequently, these individuals need intensive counseling; others need GED preparation; and still others enroll in a certificate or degree program. The College employs local residents in the neighborhoods to staff the outreach centers. The whole idea is to empower community residents to take charge of their future. College personnel assist local citizens in plotting a "vision to action plan" for community direction. While the College is a partner, it becomes part of a larger community collaborative. The synergy generated in the neighborhood centers has caught the attention of individuals in the Department of Housing and Urban Development. On a visit to Danville approximately five years ago, a HUD official encouraged the College to pursue a Community Outreach Partnership Center grant (COPC) after visiting several of the centers in Danville. Heretofore, these grants had been awarded to four-year colleges and universities. Rarely had a community college ever submitted a proposal, and none at that point had been approved. Danville Community College was one of the first community colleges in the nation to receive a COPC grant, and it was directly related to the success of the neighborhood educational opportunity centers and, therefore, to RCCI.

Although the main focus of the neighborhood centers is access, expanded educational opportunities quickly become a part of the community's workforce preparation strategy, which is directly related to educating and training citizens so that they become human resource assets to current and future employers. In other words, this process logically fits into the larger community's economic development equation. In addition, the neighborhood centers have experienced success because, as mentioned earlier, the College is viewed as a "common ground institution."[57] It is almost impossible for the College to gain respect and credibility if it has a hidden agenda. The local citizens quickly see through transparent, purely self-interested motives and will not accept the initiative unless the College is a true partner and a neutral convener.

One might ask how university and college presidents and administrators can facilitate this community-building process. As noted above, a requisite first step is to assure the local citizens that the college or university leadership is interested in transforming the community by making a difference in the two broad areas: expanding access and assisting with economic development. According to MDC's Conceptual Framework, the president's leadership style should reflect the following:

1. Assume more than a ceremonial and symbolic role in the process;
2. Articulate a vision "for a brighter future for the people's region and economy";
3. Be committed to a process of college engagement with the community and mobilize college faculty and staff to participate in that process;
4. Marshal or leverage adequate college or other resources for community investments;
5. Be personally engaged in regional and community activities;
6. Welcome change and encourage initiative;
7. Foster inclusive, collaborative leadership; and
8. Ensure that faculty and staff see and clearly understand why the college is involved in the community-building process.[58]

If the college faculty and students come into the community with any other kind of agenda – whether it is ideological, personal, or excessively research-oriented – the process will not work. Both the college representatives and the community partners will quickly discern if the leadership of the college, including the president, is really interested in engaging citizens in a community-building process. Moreover, citizens must see results. The citizens will be watching and, while they will not be expecting miracles, they will expect concrete results in terms of helping people gain marketable educational and training skills, the direct link to job placement. Community building, civic renewal, and preparing students for engaged, responsible citizenship are not merely intellectual exercises, but rather part of a long-term process that requires "heavy lifting"! But the results to the citizens, the community, and the college are dramatic, powerful, and, one might argue, essential to the nation's future.

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# MUTUAL BENEFITS THAT CAN ACCRUE TO UNIVERSITIES AND COMMUNITIES FROM THEIR INTERACTIONS WITH EACH OTHER

*John Bryant and Miriam West*

Over the past ten to fifteen years, while employed with the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative, we have worked with the University of Cincinnati, Xavier University, Wilmington College, Miami University, and Cincinnati State College on many community initiatives.

During this time period, the universities have evidenced an increasing willingness to become actively engaged with communities to address issues related to improving the economic and social life of those communities and to use those communities to enhance the learning experiences of students enrolled at their respective institutions.

A number of other organizations partnered with universities and communities in these initiatives and undertakings. Depending upon the particular effort, other participating groups included: the United Way, the Urban Appalachian Council, Links Inc., Cincinnati Chapter, the National Council of Jewish Women, the Cincinnati Public Schools, the Archdiocese Schools of Greater Cincinnati, and schools in the Hamilton County Public School District.

Leaders in higher education institutions have acknowledged the mutual benefits that accrue from university-community partnerships. One university president expressed his desire to create a sense of interdependence and a sense of responsibility within the university and between the university and the surrounding community. Administrators at two of the universities state that the fate of the city and the fate of the university are interconnected. There is a reciprocal relationship in which the university impacts the contiguous community and the contiguous community impacts the university.

This fact was underscored most dramatically when an unarmed black man was shot to death by a Cincinnati policeman. The killing sparked angry confrontations at City Hall and in the streets. University faculty and administrative staff were aware of their neighbors as they journeyed back and forth from their homes to their places of employment. Cincinnati's two largest universities are located adjacent to communities that are predominantly African-American and low-income. Nightly as they watched the news, members of the university communities saw residents from their nearby communities castigating city officials for failure to attend to the needs of their community.

The universities realize that the problems afflicting their surrounding communities impact their institutions. The universities are national institutions. Problems between their neighbors and the police have serious consequences for the universities. They realize that these highly publicized confrontations have a detrimental effect on the universities' student recruitment efforts.

The universities also realize that the neighborhoods are not just places to be studied. If the university is to be credible with the surrounding communities, it must become engaged with the community and in efforts to solve community problems.

The President of Xavier University states that, "In a city trying to heal itself, a Jesuit University, such as Xavier, has a moral basis from which to act. It can and should provide a neutral base where the search for common ground can begin." He added that "at Xavier, there is an emerging sensibility that engagement with the external community is fundamental to the mission of the university."

Universities continue to base promotion and tenure decisions on teaching and scholarship as evidenced through publications in journals related to one's field of expertise as well as grants successfully sought. However, there is an expanding notion of acceptable areas of research. In working with the community, there are matters that must be resolved including the community problem to be addressed, the resources brought to the table by the participating parties, and the external resources being sought. At times the university has been the convening party and at other times the lead comes from a nonprofit community organization.

Many university faculty members serve on the boards of community organizations such as the Urban Appalachian Council, the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative, the Children's Defense Fund, and the United Way. In other instances, university faculty members have been elected to serve on local boards of education. These affiliations provide a mechanism whereby faculty can take advantage of opportunities to become involved in local communities.

For the purposes of this essay, we divided programs and activities on which universities and communities collaborate into categories. Under each category there is a thumbnail sketch of the specific programs and activities. In each instance one of us was an active participant.

### *Collaborative Submissions of Grants*

The University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati State University, the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative, and Cincinnati Public Schools collaborated on several grants to work with students in the Cincinnati Public School System. In these collaborative endeavors, the principal investigator and the fiscal agent vary depending upon what is required by the Request for Proposal.

Oftentimes the university serves as an outside evaluator. In one instance, the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative commissioned the Economic Development Center at the University of Cincinnati to research the economic impact of a school-to-work program funded by a grant from the U. S. Department of Education. In its research the Center was able to impute the economic and social benefits that came about by increasing the number of students graduating from high school due to the school to work initiative.

### *Programs and Activities Initiated by University Students*

Many students enrolling in college have performed community service during their high school years as part of a structured high school program or with their church. Such activities might include tutoring, working on weekends at a soup kitchen, and work with the elderly. A number of these students have been recognized in a program called the Golden Galaxy Award Program.

The Golden Galaxy Award Program, co-sponsored by the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative, the *Cincinnati Enquirer,* and local television station WKRC-TV, recognizes over 300 high school seniors each year for doing community service work while maintaining high academic grade point averages. These students arrive on college campuses with a deep commitment to doing service in the broader community.

On one of the college campuses, students preparing to be history teachers were interested in helping students at a nearby public school become more proficient in social studies. They approached the University Community Relations Director seeking guidance and assistance in developing the program. After brainstorming, they hit upon the idea of working with the public school students to do an oral history project in which the public school students would conduct oral interviews with the elders in their family and neighborhood. The project enabled the public school students to learn about their family histories, and the college students learned more about the community surrounding the university.

### *Community Initiated Programs and Activities*

The Urban Appalachian Council is a nonprofit organization that works in neighborhoods that have a significant number of Appalachian residents. One of its ongoing committees is the research committee. The research committee consists of two University of Cincinnati professors, one professor from Miami University, one professor from Northern Kentucky University, the Director of Research for Children's

Hospital, the former Executive Director of the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative, and staff from the Urban Appalachian Council. The participants share their research projects that have applications for the Appalachian community.

One of the researchers analyzes census data to determine changes in the demographics of the community. The Urban Appalachian Council requests that members of the research committee study particular problem areas and present the findings to the Urban Appalachian Council Board. The Board takes these findings into consideration as it establishes goals and priorities for the Council. Some of the researchers even availed themselves of the opportunity to present their papers at the Appalachian Regional Conference.

In another community-initiated program, the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative, the University of Cincinnati, Links Inc., Cincinnati Chapter, the National Council of Jewish Women, SUMA, the Women's Alliance, Time-Warner Television Station, and Fifth Third Bank sponsor a youth conference that has been held for the past 12 years. Student participants are drawn from Cincinnati Archdiocese Schools, County Public Schools, and Cincinnati Public Schools, in such a manner as to cut across racial, religious, and economic lines. The university provides the meeting rooms, food, and staff and students to handle most of the on-campus logistical work. A community volunteer is responsible for securing the keynote speaker and persons to handle the breakout sessions. The major corporate funds for this initiative come from Time-Warner and Fifth Third. However, four women's organizations representing the diversity within the community are also financial contributors. The youth leadership conference draws approximately 600 students from about 40 high schools in the Greater Cincinnati area.

By virtue of hosting the conference, the university has on its campus potential recruits and also gets excellent word-of-mouth recognition as students return to their high schools and discuss the event. At times there has been excellent coverage by the local newspaper. Breakout sessions generally serve between 30 and 50 students. Each group has a college guide provided by the college Admissions Office to move the group from one breakout session to another. The opportunity to interact with college students obviously has an impact on the high school students, many of whom would be the first from their generation to attend college.

The Cincinnati Youth Collaborative operates an extensive school-based mentoring program where adults are matched in a one-to-one relationship with students attending Cincinnati Public Schools. Area colleges are one of the vital sources of mentors and tutors. Undergraduate students looking to do community service often volunteer to mentor or tutor. The University of Cincinnati student newspaper has often publicized the need for community involvement and provides a listing of volunteer opportunities throughout the city.

In one instance, a professor in the College of Medicine recruited medical school students to serve as mentors. Through this mechanism, the professor was helping to prepare her medical students to learn about the surrounding community. Many of the persons coming into the emergency room at the University Hospital come from the communities from which the mentees are drawn. The University of Cincinnati Law School has also worked closely with the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative in facilitating access to the mentoring program for its students.

The Cincinnati Youth Collaborative has launched a College Coach Program, which is an adaptation of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government C. O. A. C. H. program. In this program, college students work in high schools to provide information and instruction on how to explore educational opportunities and navigate the college application and financial aid process to primarily first generation college students. To begin the pilot program, students from the College of Mount Saint Joseph will "coach" high school students attending a neighboring public high school. The college students will travel to the high school once a week and spend 45 to 60 minutes with selected students. The college coaches will receive a stipend of $400 to $600 each academic year from the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative and they will receive recognition from their university. The high school students and their parents will also have the opportunity to visit the college campus.

### *Episodic/Opportunistic Programs and Activities*

Ohio Supreme Court Chief Justice The Honorable Thomas Moyer established an Ohio Courts Future Commission to make recommendations for ways in which to improve the court system in the State of Ohio. The commission consisted of 50 members in addition to two co-chairs. The commission was equally divided between lay persons and those having some direct relationship with the courts including judges, court administrators, court clerks, law professors, and so on.

To do its preliminary work, the commission broke into five task forces (Access and Quality, Structure, Public Awareness, Technology, and Rules and Procedures) consisting of ten members each. Professors from three local law schools were asked to have their students research topics under consideration by the Access and Quality Task Force and present a synopsis of their findings to that body. One of the thorniest issues taken up by the Task Force dealt with the method by which judges should come to the bench, through an election or by appointment. The faculty members and their students received recognition at their universities for valuable service rendered to the improvement of the system of justice in the State of Ohio.

### *Courses Carrying Academic Credit*

Classroom teachers need to be able to interact effectively with the students enrolled in their classes. In order to do so, it is desirable that the teacher be able to interact effectively with the parents of those students in the context of the neighborhoods and communities from whence the students come.

One teacher preparation program requires that all students seeking a teaching license complete a two credit-hour course. The course is structured so that the prospective teachers meet with parents and community members that serve low-income Urban Appalachian and African-American communities. Through this experience, the college students learn firsthand the hopes, aspirations, and frustrations that the residents express as they interact with the school system. Later in the week the college students meet with teachers and administrators from the neighborhood school to discuss how the school system responds to the concerns expressed by the parents and community members.

### *University-Initiated Outreach Programs*

The City of Cincinnati is contiguous to many smaller municipalities, including Elmwood Place, Norwood, Saint Bernard, Lockland, Deer Park, Silverton, and Reading. Most of these municipalities are aging and experiencing economic hardships.

Xavier University, in addition to reaching out to adjacent communities within the City of Cincinnati, is preparing to tailor its expertise to address the needs of the smaller municipalities that ring the City. Some of the programs that have been discussed were begun prior to 1990 and are still in place today. Others have been projects of an intentionally limited duration. Still others have ended with the expiration of external funding.

### *Conclusion*

While projects and initiatives will inevitably come and go, the engagement between universities and their surrounding communities can and should continue because of the mutual benefits accruing to the parties. The universities gain the goodwill of their neighboring communities. They have access to the communities where their students can have positive interactions with persons they will come into contact with and affect in their professional lives in a myriad of ways. The universities have access to real-life teaching, learning, and research possibilities that will enrich their academic programs.

There are many ways in which communities can benefit from partnerships with universities as well. For example, communities have access to the expertise within the university. Students from the community enrolled in elementary and high schools will more likely aspire to attend college because the university will be perceived as an attainable option. The sustainability of the engagement process is enhanced when the university recognizes the coincidence of the involvement with the mission of university to prepare its students for participation in all levels and segments of a rapidly changing social order and when the university recognizes that it a part of the economic and social life of the communities in which it is located. The sustainability of the process is enhanced when each of the parties receives recognition and visibility for its participation in the initiatives.

Through effective engagement, universities and communities are able to leverage assets and maximize resources. Both are better able to fulfill their missions when they are able to work collaboratively.

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## PART FOUR

# *Is It Working? Three Universities Take On Assessment*

# ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES IN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND HIGHER EDUCATION

*Kathleen Ferraiolo*

All of the essayists in this volume share a conviction that higher education must play a greater role in preparing students for citizenship and strengthening local communities. One of the most pressing questions in the higher education-civic engagement field is how to encourage institutions that have not fully embraced a civic mission to do so. For skeptical administrators, faculty, students, and other university stakeholders, evidence of the effectiveness of engagement efforts at other institutions might provide a needed push for such efforts on their own campuses. At institutions that already pride themselves on teaching civic responsibility and building community partnerships, assessment strategies offer many other benefits. Assessment and evaluation can advance institutional learning about what works and lead to refinements in civic engagement programs and activities. In addition, assessment strategies can validate the work of professionals who take part in civic learning efforts, stimulate funding opportunities from alumni and other givers, and provide a powerful internal justification for continuing this work. Some have argued that the success of the higher education-community partnerships movement itself is dependent on the development and implementation of effective evaluation methods.[59] "In an era dominated by the twin themes of privatization and accountability," one report asserts, "and in light of eroding public funding for higher education, it is essential to build assessments of the civic contributions of higher education into ongoing accountability reports."[60]

Despite the importance of assessment or evaluation in civic education, the nature of the task itself is discouraging for some, and most colleges and universities do not assess their programs to foster students' civic development.[61] Creating indicators of civic skill development and the community impact of university engagement can be fraught with challenges. Other obstacles to assessment include the lack of institutional priority assigned to higher education's teaching and service roles, the values-laden nature that some attach to civic educational and community service activities, and the other institutional priorities that compete for the attention and resources of higher education institutions, faculty, and administrators.[62]

What strategies can help foster a willingness to engage in assessment? Higher education has made significant advances recently in developing indicators of success, although they vary from institution to institution. Several factors critical to the success of institutional engagement have emerged, including support from administrative and faculty leadership as well as a mission statement and a holistic, intentional strategy that support and strengthen the institution's civic role. In May 2002, Campus Compact launched a three-year Indicators of Engagement project, which combines documentation and dissemination of best practices of engaged institutions with an effort to help institutionalize civic engagement across campuses. The project has identified a number of other indicators of engagement, including internal resource allocation, community voice, and forums for fostering public dialogue.[63] Such efforts to institutionalize engagement and standardize assessment can, as many of the essayists have documented, provide valuable benefits for both universities and communities.

As Maurrasse has pointed out, the evaluation of civic engagement activities depends on a "theory of change" in which universities must ask themselves, "what is it we are trying to achieve?"[59] Indicators of success and assessment strategies flow from the answer to this question. Put simply, well-designed assessment and evaluation strategies can not only improve the quality and outcomes of individual civic education programs and activities, but can also enhance the civic mission and agenda of colleges and universities writ large.

In the remainder of this essay, I present an overview of the assessment strategies that three institutions of higher education have undertaken, with a focus on strategies to evaluate students' development of civic skills. While Tusculum College, Morehouse College, and Michigan State University have approached the question of evaluation in different ways, there is much to learn from the successes and challenges each institution has experienced.

## *Tusculum College: A College-Wide Commitment to Civic Education*

### The "Civic Arts" Mission

Located on a 170-acre campus in Greeneville, Tennessee, Tusculum College actively embraces a commitment to civic engagement, or what it calls "the civic arts." As the term was originally used by the Roman orator, philosopher, statesman, and educator Cicero (from whose villa Tusculum takes its name), the civic arts referred to the skills, attitudes, and abilities appropriate to citizenship in a democratic society. Education for effective citizenship is at the heart of Tusculum's mission, philosophy, and curriculum. For Tusculum College today, the Civic Arts Mission embraces excellence in both the skills and virtues necessary for productive citizenship. Since its founding in 1794, Tusculum has been affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (USA) and envisions itself as an institution of higher learning "in the civic republican tradition" committed to developing educated citizens who excel in academics, are committed to public service, and display solid character.

College and university mission statements frequently articulate a commitment to the public good but too often fail to bear witness to that commitment in performing the core functions of teaching, research, and service. At Tusculum, the civic arts emphasis is borne out not only in its mission statement but through a core curriculum, a focused calendar or block scheduling system, an emphasis on service learning, and a set of competencies that identify the skills and attitudes students are expected to develop. The Commons Curriculum, a set of core courses that all students must complete, provides a basis for an intellectual "common ground" that can stimulate learning and discussion from a shared point of reference. One Commons course, "Athens to Philadelphia," leads students through the development of democracy and examines the evolution of the concepts of self-government and citizenship in the United States. "Jerusalem" probes the roots of compassion and the qualities of good citizenship, while "Citizenship and Social Change" explores theories of social problems and aspects of social justice, and includes a 10-hour service learning component.

Other aspects of the Tusculum experience also emphasize a commitment to the civic arts. The "focused calendar," in which students take one course at a time for a period of three and a half weeks, allows undergraduates to delve deeply into a particular subject matter both in and outside the classroom. Many courses at Tusculum include community involvement, and the College's Service Learning Center not only develops and implements the Commons Service Learning courses, it also helps students in planning and undertaking other community-based projects.

Perhaps most important, at Tusculum community outreach is not seen merely as an add-on or as an episodic act of altruism, but as an integral part of the curriculum and the undergraduate experience. It is hoped that outreach and service learning activities become internalized and cultivate habits of responsible citizenship and lives devoted to contributing to the good of the community. Service is directly linked to classroom curricula as well as to independent student projects. According to Robin Fife, Director of the Service-Learning Center, students are grounded in issue-based knowledge and introduced to community leaders before engaging in the project. Reflection opportunities are integrated throughout the experience, individually through writing projects and together as a class through discussion and deliberation with peers and instructors.

Finally, Tusculum's Competency Program ensures that students develop the skills both for fulfilling careers and for productive citizenship. By the time they graduate, students are expected to have developed proficiency in nine different areas that are deemed important to the Civic Arts Mission and to the development of an educated person. Tusculum emphasizes both what it calls the "foundational competencies" of writing, analytical reading, public speaking, critical analysis, computer literacy, and mathematics and the three "virtue competencies" of self-knowledge, civility, and ethics of social responsibility. Every course in the curriculum designates at least one foundation or virtue competency for development.

### Assessment at Tusculum College: Alumni Surveys and the Virtue Competencies

The virtue competencies are at the heart of Tusculum's efforts to nurture in its students the skills and attitudes essential for democratic citizenship. Dr. Carolyn Brown, Assistant Vice President of Academic Affairs at Tusculum, spearheaded the design and implementation of a Virtue Competencies Survey of current students as well as an Alumni Survey that would measure the importance and extent of current involvement in civic and organizational activities.

Administered to 1,048 students in the spring of 2003, the Virtue Competencies Survey was created to evaluate the effectiveness of the virtue competencies for developing and enhancing students' citizenship skills. Students were asked to rate how important a variety of activities related to self-knowledge, civility, and the ethics of social responsibility were to their lives and how often they participated in those activities. The Self-Knowledge component of the survey posed questions relating to students' personal goals, the common good, and connectedness with self and others. The Civility component included questions about communication, conflict resolution, and personal/social skills. In the Ethics and Social Responsibility section, students answered questions about electoral participation, cultural differences and diversity, and listening and communication skills. A final section of the survey measured students' frequency of participation in twelve community-related activities including church, youth clubs, public and private K-12 schools, and civic and environmental organizations.

The results of the Virtue Competencies Survey showed that on average, students rated the activities related to the three competencies as "somewhat important" in their lives and reported that they "sometimes" participated in competency-related activities. There were significant differences among various sub-groups. For example, female students indicated significantly higher rates of importance and participation for all three scales than their male counterparts. Students in the sciences and those whose majors were undecided scored significantly lower than non-science majors. Those who were 26 years of age or older had significantly higher rates of Civility Importance and Participation as well as Ethics of Social Responsibility Participation. This was not an unusual finding for Tusculum since approximately one-half of its students are non-traditional working adults. The most frequent type of extra-curricular activity revolved around the church and church-related activities. Survey analysts found that students' scores on Self-Knowledge Participation were a strong predictor of their involvement in extracurricular activities, while student demographic characteristics were not significantly related to extracurricular involvement.[64] Overall, while the Virtue Competencies Survey was useful for illustrating student levels of importance and participation, administrators acknowledge the need for further research to investigate its relationship to other civic engagement qualities.

With assistance from the Office of Institutional Advancement, Dr. Brown developed the 2003 Alumni Survey to determine how important academic and civic skills and aptitudes were to College alumni and to what extent the College helped foster these skills. Both personal (problem-solving, computer skills) and civic (working as a team member, developing leadership skills, exercising the rights and responsibilities of a citizen) skills and aptitudes were included in the survey. The survey also posed questions about past and current involvement in service and other activities, including athletics, environmental causes, youth groups, civic or service organizations, and other groups. Finally, the survey asked alumni to indicate how often they vote in local, state, and national elections. The first Alumni Survey was sent to students who had graduated from Tusculum in the last three years; future versions will include earlier classes of Tusculum graduates. Alumni Survey respondents reported that while service and other activities were still very important to them, their involvement had decreased in certain areas. One reason for this may be that in the years immediately after college graduation students are busy establishing careers, buying their first homes, and starting families. As a result of these data, Tusculum officials decided to target a broader base of alumni in the next survey cycle. As alumni become more established, officials hope that the level of civic engagement will rise. Overall, both the Virtue Competencies Survey and the Alumni Survey incorporated valid, well-designed measures of personal and civic skills and suggest that there is a close relationship between them. College administrators look forward to gathering additional data from future surveys that will, in turn, help to shape and reinforce the Civic Arts Mission.

Tusculum College has experienced some challenges during its first forays into assessment. Like many institutions, it faces the problem of gathering valid alumni data and of obtaining an acceptable response rate from its graduates. With regard to the Virtue Competencies Survey, College officials stressed the importance of having students take seriously the role of assessment. An additional challenge – and indeed, one shared by all engagement efforts – is to encourage students to think beyond their own career or personal aspirations and to assume the role of becoming responsible citizens in a larger community. The survey results and the articulation of Tusculum's Civic Arts Mission throughout the curriculum and beyond suggest that many Tusculum students are doing just that.

## *Morehouse College: Blending Personal Character and Community Spirit*

### Cultivating Leadership in Young African-American Men

The nation's only private, historically black, four-year liberal arts college for men, Morehouse College in Atlanta enrolls approximately 3,000 students and confers bachelor's degrees on more African-American men than any other institution in the world. Morehouse's mission and curriculum emphasize academic excellence and preparing students for leadership and public service. President Walter E. Massey articulated the Morehouse College philosophy when he said, "Morehouse's primary mission is to empower young men – intellectually, socially, and morally – to be leaders in their careers and in their communities."[65] Morehouse claims certain foundational principles upon which its existence stands, including justice, equality, liberation, the humane treatment of all people, and the development of the spiritual self and community.[66] In an environment that gives special attention to the development of African-American men, Morehouse College aims to both prepare students for careers or graduate study and to nurture in them the skills and attitudes that will enable them to be responsible leaders and citizens.

Established in 1995 with a gift from the Coca-Cola Foundation, the Leadership Center at Morehouse College is committed to strengthening society through ethical leadership. The Center was created to reflect the ideal of the "beloved community" embraced by Martin Luther King Jr. and other distinguished Morehouse alumni. The "beloved community" ideal supports the cultivation of compassion, integrity, and courage as primary values in the development of leaders. A 2003 evaluation report indicated a number of strengths of the Leadership Center and its programs, including institutional support, a program that is strongly tied to the College's mission, faculty involvement, and diversified funding.[67]

The Leadership Center offers several educational programs, such as the Coca-Cola Leadership Lecture Series, which sponsors public lectures by and discussions with prominent leaders and leadership experts including James MacGregor Burns and the Rev. Jesse L. Jackson. According to Leadership Center Director Dr. Walter Fluker, one of the most important benefits of sponsoring dialogues and conversations with such prominent leaders is in "bringing students right into the middle of those conversations early on, which creates a great way of providing a basis for their development as civic actors."[68]

As Dr. Fluker put it, Morehouse College prepares students to be change agents, to be transformers of culture. The expectation is that when students graduate, they will understand their own responsibilities as citizens of local, national, and international communities. Morehouse prides itself on a tradition of creating world-class leaders; alumni include Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., Maynard Jackson, and Spike Lee.

## Assessment at Morehouse College: The "Soft Skills" of Leadership

Through several research projects, the Leadership Center involves faculty, students, and scholars-in-residence in data collection, analysis, and publication of papers on issues related to the Center's mission. For example, through the Faith Communities and Urban Families Project, the Center gathers data on low-income housing residents and adjacent faith-based institutions in four cities, prepares reports on the findings, and creates action plans for strengthening interactions between faith communities and the urban poor. The Public Influences of the African-American Churches Project is designed to facilitate research and dialogue among community activists, church leaders, and public officials about the impact of African-American churches on public policy and public discourse. In addition to the Leadership Center itself, Morehouse offers a leadership studies minor that includes a community service component. The minor also includes core courses in the foundations of leadership; history, theory, and future of leadership; and a capstone course taught by Dr. Fluker on ethical leadership from African-American moral traditions.

Several other centers at Morehouse embrace the College's commitment to leadership development and community involvement. Through a variety of initiatives housed within the Brisbane Institute (including a public service internship program, a Center for Studies in Applied Politics, and several community-based outreach programs), students are trained in political leadership and participate in community-based research that addresses the political and social needs of the African-American and larger communities. The Emma and Joe Adams Public Service Institute serves as a clearinghouse for activities that create positive community change.

Morehouse College and the Leadership Center are just beginning to initiate assessment efforts that they believe will validate the importance and effectiveness of their work. Survey results of participants in the Summer Ethical Leadership Program for pre-college African-American men indicate improvement along a variety of dimensions. Participants in the week-long experience reported that it positively impacted their ability to initiate social interaction, join with others, and make long-term commitments, and improved their self-control, self-esteem, and independence.[69]

Other efforts to create survey instruments that evaluate undergraduates' development of leadership and civic skills are under development at the Leadership Center. Part of the challenge in developing such instruments is the difficulty in measuring progress on Morehouse's emphasis on the "beloved community" and on the affective dimensions of leadership such as compassion, integrity, courage, and even love.

Morehouse College is intentional about developing what Dr. Fluker and Rheba Knox, Director of Education and Training at the Leadership Center, call the "moral and spiritual infrastructure" of students before focusing on the easier-to-quantify "hard skills" of leadership and citizenship. There is so much emphasis on those "hard skills" (such as community problem-solving and team-building), Fluker and Knox argue, that too often the "soft skills" that Morehouse focuses on are lost.

## *Michigan State University: A Public, Land-Grant Institution's Answer to the Question of Engagement and Assessment*

### Higher Education's Covenant With Society

As one of the earliest land-grant institutions in the United States, Michigan State University served as a model for other such institutions and today enrolls over 40,000 students. To a great extent, the University acknowledged during a major initiative that took place in the early 1990s, outreach involving faculty, staff, and students was already occurring through the University's fourteen colleges and its various centers and institutes. However, Michigan State wanted to aim higher, creating a new model in which outreach would become a central and integrated dimension of the institution's overall mission. Part of Michigan State's philosophy of engagement is that a land-grant university has a special role to engage its students, faculty, and instructional and research resources to improve workforce practice and economic strength *as well as* citizen participation and civic responsibility.[70]

More so than many other large public universities, Michigan State recognizes the need to maintain and strengthen what it calls the "social covenant" between the university and society for the benefit of both. University stakeholders acknowledge the importance of lifelong learning and believe that new public challenges involving, for example, economic competitiveness, public education, poverty, and the environment demand the application of scholarly expertise. In order to sustain public support and continue to improve the economic, social, and civic vitality of local, national, and international communities, universities must adapt to changing societal conditions. As one Michigan State report aptly put it, "the need for our University to adapt to the knowledge needs of a changing world is particularly challenging because society is undergoing rapid and fundamental transformation. This transformation requires higher education's active and creative involvement."[71]

In 1988, Michigan State made a commitment to "broaden, strengthen, and more fully integrate the extension and application of knowledge, or what [the institution] now refers to as outreach, as a primary mission of each major academic unit."[72] The W.K. Kellogg Foundation accelerated the University's burgeoning commitment to engagement by awarding a $10.2 million grant to help support this institution-wide realignment process. According to Dr. Lorilee Sandmann, then Director of Community Outreach at Michigan State, the Kellogg grant helped MSU move into the upper echelon of research universities performing outreach and allowed it to more easily forge links with like-minded organizations such as Campus Compact. At the completion of the grant in October 1995, MSU held a capstone symposium that brought together administrators and faculty from over sixty universities to focus on institutional strategies to strengthen and integrate outreach as a fundamental component of the mission of American colleges and universities. The presentations that took place at the symposium, as well as other reports produced during the course of the

Kellogg grant, offer valuable lessons for other institutions interested in enhancing their own engagement.

In January 1992, the Provost's Committee on University Outreach was convened and charged with articulating an intellectual foundation for outreach and making recommendations for strengthening outreach at Michigan State. During an 18-month period, committee members read and discussed relevant literature, interviewed more than 100 MSU colleagues, sought input from about 100 outreach constituents in roundtable discussions conducted across the state of Michigan, and studied university outreach as it was being undertaken at nearly twenty national peer institutions. The committee articulated its belief in a "social covenant" through its broad definition of "outreach": "universities exist to generate, transmit, apply, and preserve knowledge. When they do these things for the direct benefit of external audiences, they are doing outreach." At MSU, outreach is not merely a synonym for service, but, at its best, is embedded in the university's core functions – that is, outreach can occur as teaching, as research, or as service. The Provost's Committee identified four defining characteristics of what it called the MSU Outreach Model:

- First, outreach is defined as scholarship which must be reflective, cumulative, based on current knowledge, and resulting in new insights and understandings that are subject to critical review. In other words, outreach both draws on knowledge developed through other forms of scholarship and contributes to the knowledge base.
- Second, outreach cuts across and enhances both the teaching and research missions of the university. In this formulation, outreach can take a variety of forms including applied research, technical assistance, demonstration projects, impact evaluations, student service-learning, policy analysis, and off-campus credit and noncredit instruction.
- Third, outreach is conducted for the direct benefit of external constituents in ways consistent with the mission of the university. Outreach must be assessed in terms of both its impact on the external constituent and on the extent to which it enhances the university's other mission dimensions.
- Fourth, outreach is the responsibility of each academic unit in the same way that the units are responsible for serving the other dimensions of the university's mission. In MSU's approach to outreach, academic units are evaluated based on their contribution to the full breadth of the research, teaching, and outreach mission.[73]

Today, MSU is proud of the diversity in focus and approach of its outreach activities. The office of Dr. Hiram Fitzgerald, Assistant Provost for University Outreach and Engagement, has identified several focal areas for engagement, including children, youth, and families; community and economic development; and community and family security. With strong leadership from the University Provost, Dr. Fitzgerald's office acts as a catalyst for engagement by helping faculty members understand how to engage the community in equal partnerships and by linking faculty resources and expertise with community needs. According to Dr. Fitzgerald, today the outreach and engagement mission of MSU is largely achieved through community-based research. For example, he cited his office's efforts to advocate for a broader definition of scholarship than the traditional disciplinary emphasis on peer-reviewed publications. "We are trying to convince faculty," Dr. Fitzgerald explained, "that in a community setting, peer review occurs as a *result* of publication, not prior to publication as in the disciplines."[74]

There are many examples of outreach initiatives currently taking place at Michigan State, such as My Brother's Keeper, Science Theater, and the Michigan Partnership for Economic Development Assistance. Through the mentoring program My Brother's Keeper, which is designed to improve the educational self-esteem of at-risk students, with an emphasis on African-American males, MSU undergraduates serve as volunteer mentors and role models for fifth and sixth graders. Science Theater, a program designed and operated by graduate students in physics and astronomy, provides hands-on, scripted science shows tailored to suit individual requests, most of which come from elementary and middle school teachers. The Michigan Partnership for Economic Development Assistance is committed to addressing the problems confronting distressed communities in the state of Michigan. The Partnership's activities involve producing multi-year workplans to promote and support local economic development efforts that include research, training, and direct assistance to development agencies and community-based organizations. These are just a few of the many ongoing engagement activities at Michigan State that demonstrate the fulfillment of the University's outreach mission.

### Assessment at Michigan State University: Defining Successful Outreach and Encouraging Community-Based Research

By clearly identifying the features and potential benefits of successful outreach, MSU facilitates the realization of the outreach mission as well the implementation of assessment efforts designed to evaluate its effectiveness. The four characteristics of the Outreach Model outlined above demand significant internal changes, including the creation of incentives and rewards that reinforce the importance of outreach; reevaluation of budget to ensure that outreach is prioritized; and development of new approach to faculty and graduate student development that emphasizes the application of professional skills to outreach scholarship. Rather than housing the outreach function exclusively in a separate office that has little overlap with academic departments, MSU sought to integrate outreach into the teaching and learning experience by encouraging ownership of the outreach mission by each academic unit.

Questions of assessment have been important to Michigan State University since its reevaluation of outreach was initiated in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Many of the presentations and addresses that took place at the capstone symposium acknowledged assessment as central to the institutionalization of university outreach. As one speaker put it, "probably the greatest challenge in repositioning outreach is the need to develop quality indicators or benchmarks to measure outcomes and success."[75]

Those indicators, MSU recognizes, must measure not only faculty performance but also community perceptions of the success of outreach activities. Michigan State stakeholders realized that the goal of institutionalizing outreach would be achieved only when planning and evaluating outreach activities were considered just as important as the existence and content of those activities.

A dedicated group of faculty and administrators took up the question of assessment in 1993, when the Provost's Committee recommended the formation of a Committee on Quality Outreach. The new committee was charged with developing MSU's thinking about planning, measuring, and evaluating quality outreach. According to Dr. Sandmann, who chaired the committee, four assumptions grounded its work:

- Both quantitative and qualitative indicators are essential for evaluating the quality of outreach activities.
- Evaluation is useful at all stages of the process: for planning purposes; for formative and developmental purposes; and for summative, outcome purposes.
- Evaluation is necessary both at the unit and the individual level.
- Documentation must be tailored for its particular purpose.[76]

The committee developed a set of characteristics of quality outreach activities that could guide the design and implementation of those activities at MSU and at other institutions. Outreach should be flexible, creative, and innovative; it should have a long-term, sustained impact; and it should benefit the university, the discipline, the faculty member, and the constituent. The publication that the committee produced, *Points of Distinction: A Guidebook for Planning and Evaluating Quality Outreach,* includes a series of questions, planning tools, and suggestions designed to help academic units craft definitions and assessments of outreach specific to their own needs and areas of expertise. The guidebook identifies four dimensions of quality outreach (significance, context, scholarship, and impact) and provides an assessment matrix that can serve both as a planning guide for those embarking on outreach projects as well as a comprehensive tool for the evaluation of outreach activities. The matrix includes sample questions as well as qualitative and quantitative indicators that tap into the dimensions of significance, context, scholarship and impact.

Looking back recently on her tenure at Michigan State, Dr. Sandmann reflected on how difficult it was to develop quality indicators of assessment. It was a real challenge for the committee to operationalize indicators in a way that yielded achievable measures that could be attained in a cost-effective manner. In addition, Dr. Sandmann pointed out that getting all of the stakeholders on board was difficult, in particular, "trying to put yourself in their shoes and think, 'what would I need to know to know that my outreach was working?'"[77]

Despite the challenges inherent in assessment, tools that enable universities to evaluate a unit's outreach projects and activities, that assist faculty in assembling outreach portfolios, and that offer suggestions for how to reward quality outreach advance the institutionalization and routinization of outreach in by clearly documenting its occurrence and its effects. In addition, the standardization of measures of quality outreach across universities can further advance the outreach agenda. The work of the Committee on Quality Outreach, as well as the Provost's Committee on University Outreach, set a new agenda for Michigan State and other universities that positioned both outreach and the assessment as central components of the university's mission and work.

In the last several years, Michigan State University has devoted a great deal of time and energy to the question of assessment. In particular, the Assistant Provost's Office, under the leadership of Dr. Diane Zimmerman and Dr. Robert Church, has spent the last four years developing a web-based outreach and engagement measurement instrument and has solicited both internal and external feedback on the validity of that instrument. While most assessment efforts tend to focus on "ways to document student learning outcomes in terms of measurable competencies and other outcomes,"[78] MSU's assessment efforts have focused primarily on the scholarship of engagement and community-based research.

Dr. Fitzgerald at MSU explained that the instrument is designed to tap into several key outcomes. Most important, it will enable faculty and staff to obtain credit for performing outreach and engagement. The outcomes of the assessment effort will also be used for planning and resource education; to provide public accountability; to make cross-institutional comparisons of engagement activities; and to establish best practices within and outside the University. The assessment instrument includes both quantitative indicators (which might ask faculty what percentage of their time is spent on outreach, what kind of outreach they have performed, and how many students or colleagues were involved) and qualitative components (whereby faculty can provide more detailed information about the content and impact of outreach initiatives). When it is fully implemented over the next academic year, the tool will allow the documentation of faculty outreach and the systematic consideration of outreach as a component of promotion and tenure decisions as well as enable the University Provost to establish and evaluate outreach benchmarks for various academic units. Ultimately, the information faculty provide through the assessment tool will be incorporated within the MSU Statewide web site, enabling any interested citizen to identify which faculty member is performing what kind of outreach in any particular area of the state. This effort will enable the efficient and effective transmission of engagement information and will create a clear, navigable "front door" to the University for community members.

Of course, like the other institutions profiled here, Michigan State University has had to confront obstacles in its effort to assess outreach and engagement. Dr. Fitzgerald points out that some of the greatest challenges have been convincing faculty to accepting community partners as equals and encouraging faculty to think of engagement as something other than service. The Outreach and Engagement office attempts to overcome these obstacles by assigning staff members to assist faculty in outreach assignments, facilitating focus groups that bring faculty and community members together, and offering workshops on conducting community-based research at the departmental level. Still, as Dr. Fitzgerald acknowledged, it will always be the case that some faculty will be more supportive of and amenable to engagement, while others will be opposed to or apathetic about it.

## *Conclusion*

The colleges and universities that understand the need for assessment and the way to go about implementing evaluation tools and strategies share many similarities. Perhaps the most important are a belief that career preparation and citizenship education are not isolated endeavors, but instead go hand in hand, and a commitment to building support for engagement activities by documenting their results for the university and community partners to witness. The institutions profiled in this essay understand that the future of the civic engagement movement and its institutionalization in colleges and universities depends in large part on their ability to justify resource investments, stimulate improvement of engagement programs and activities, and document the results and outcomes of those activities for faculty, students, and communities. How can we measure the degree to which assessment has become a priority for colleges and universities committed to civic engagement? Dr. Sandmann, now at the University of Georgia and co-Director of the National Review Board for the Scholarship of Engagement, may have put it best in saying, "when you no longer need to talk about assessment because it's embedded in everything you do, then you've succeeded."[79]

Assessment efforts face some similar challenges. First, there is the issue of determining what the institution is trying to measure and what it is trying to achieve through its civic engagement programs. Many of the skills and attitudes of citizenship defy easy quantification, and much of the work of assessment is in creating and testing appropriate indicators of progress. Second, students must be willing to participate in and take seriously tests that are administered to them in order to allow for valid results about their attitudes and behaviors. Finally, institutional and faculty support for assessment efforts can enhance both their existence and their impact. The institutionalization of assessment requires first that colleges and universities prioritize their civic roles and responsibilities. Institutional leadership and faculty buy-in can be instrumental in the decision to pursue assessment strategies, their design, and their influence on higher education mission, curriculum, and policy.

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***Suggested Resources***

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