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Catalyst for Democracy? Outcomes and Processes 

The *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship* is published at The University of Alabama by the Division of Community Affairs to advance the scholarship of engagement worldwide. To reach the editor, send an email to jces@ua.edu or call 205-348-7392. See also www.jces.ua.edu.
As editor of *JCES*, it is indeed with pride, enthusiasm, and anticipation that this special conference issue is provided at the 2013 Engagement Scholarship Consortium (ESC) meeting, an evolutionary outcome of the group that annually presented what has been known as the National Outreach Scholarship Conference (NOSC). This issue of *JCES*, as well as the shift from NOSC to ESC, is indicative of the dynamic growth in engagement scholarship. There is a surreal feeling, knowing that this issue of *JCES* is a special NOSC 2012 (the last conference under that name) put together specifically for circulation at the first conference under the auspices of ESC. Representing some of the best engagement scholarship there is today, the diversity of manuscripts, topics, and authors in this issue are as varied as was attendance at NOSC 2012.

Held at The University of Alabama, the first non-land-grant university to host the conference, there were 613 persons from 39 states, Canada, Nigeria, and Egypt in attendance. Eighty-four colleges and universities and 47 community agencies were represented with community partners from 14 different states. I am especially impressed with the emphasis this conference placed on community partners, involving them in all aspects of the conference development and having a community partners’ track. One of my personal highlights of the conference was to see a room full of community partners in attendance at a workshop designed specifically for community partners to provide them with concrete suggestions on how to negotiate fuller participation across the spectrum in community-academic partnerships. As one attendee stated, "Thank you so much for this. Attending this session has made my trip here from Chicago worthwhile."

As in every issue of *JCES*, this issue reflects the voices of community partners, academic institutions of higher education, and students. In our community and student pieces, written by Felecia Jones and Kirstin Barnes respectively, the authors share their individual viewpoints and experiences of NOSC 2012. We especially want to highlight a piece written by whom we believe just might the youngest presenters ever at an academic conference. These students’ proposal went through the regular peer review process for the conference and their abstract was accepted. In a standing room only crowd, these now fifth grade students presented as if they were seasoned professionals, receiving a standing ovation. Based on their presentation, we invited them to write one of the Student Voices pieces for this issue. So, I invite you to read these phenomenal students’ submission, entitled, “Learning Professional Journalism with Help from University Faculty and Students.” We congratulate the authors, Mr. Joshua Patton and Sean Smith and their teacher, Miss Latrina Spencer. To gain a more thorough understanding of their project, read Dr. George L. Daniels’ manuscript entitled, “A Five-Step Model for ‘Unconventional Engagement’."

Also related to NOSC 2012, I encourage you to read the summaries of the conference’s outstanding plenary speakers. Ranging from a U.S. Ambassador, to university presidents and professors, these speakers provide us with insight, encouragement, reflections, and wisdom on community engagement and engagement scholarship from their years of experience in the field. Summaries of the Magrath Award competitors, whose work represents the best of university-community partnerships, provide examples of the ways
Contributing to Family Health Using a Promotora Program in Guatemala

Roxanne Amerson

Abstract

Pneumonia and diarrhea can be addressed with early detection and education, yet low rates of literacy and high rates of poverty impact the ability of parents in rural Guatemala to recognize and seek treatment for their children. This article describes the health promotion program implemented to address these and other common health problems in one isolated community. A promotora program utilizes informal, indigenous leaders within the community to promote health in Latino populations. Developing a health education program based on the promotora concept empowered the women of the community by giving them the knowledge and skills to improve the health of their families and their community. The lessons learned from this culturally-based health promotion model are appropriate for application in local and international communities.

Contributing to Family Health Using a Promotora Program in Guatemala

At the 2009 Biennial Convention of Sigma Theta Tau International, Dr. Karin Morin issued a call-to-action to members of the nursing honor society to contribute to global health. She linked this call to the United Nation's eight Millennium Development Goals as a way for nurses to support the improvement of health for women and children by 2015. More recently at the 2011 convention, Dr. Suzanne Prevost issued her call-to-action to engage in collaboration by bridging the gap between research and practice and responding to vulnerable populations by promoting health for mothers and children. This paper will focus on the implementation of a health promotion program designed to meet these calls-to-action voiced by Dr. Morin and Dr. Prevost. The aims of the paper are to: (1) To discuss the organizing construct of a promotora program for use with Latino populations, (2) To describe the implementation of a promotora program, and (3) To share conclusions and lessons learned from this experience conducted in a rural community in the Highlands of Guatemala.

In the Highlands of Guatemala, the indigenous Mayan women remain a highly marginalized group. Like other women around the world, they need the skills and knowledge to empower themselves to make decisions about their own health and the health of their families. Both extreme poverty and a lack of education in a male-dominated society prevent them from having a voice or the ability to make decisions which can positively influence the health of their family and community. A research paper commissioned by the Center for Global Development (Hallman, Peracca, Catino, & Ruiz, 2006) documented the multiple disadvantages that Mayan women face. As young girls they are the least likely to begin primary school, the latest to start primary school, and the first group to drop out of school. The major contributing factors to these rates are the household duties and the poverty that Mayan families experience in the rural regions of Guatemala. Often, parental expectations are limited in relation to the future roles their daughters will have; therefore, education may seem unnecessary for their female children. Overall, indigenous Mayans have an average of 2.5 years of schooling compared to non-indigenous groups with 5.7 years of schooling. Female Mayans remain the most marginalized group in Guatemala with only 39% of them being literate. The lack of education contributes to the high rates of poverty within the region. According to The World Bank (2012), the gross national income per capita in 2010 for Guatemala was $2,740. In 2006, 51% of the population was at the national poverty line. The risks factors of poverty and lack of education represent major barriers to the health of the indigenous women and children of Guatemala. Education in any form, primary school or health, provides one way to reduce the health risks and limit the disadvantages these families experience in their daily lives.

Organizing Construct

A promotora de salud (Spanish for “promoter of health”) is an indigenous leader within a community, who has been trained to address common health issues within the community (Elder, Ayala, Parra-Medina, & Talavera, 2009).
Normally, the promotora is a woman (Arizmendi & Ortiz, 2004). In most Latin American countries, the culture dictates that women are the care providers within the home. They are expected to care for their husband and children during periods of health and illness. Building upon this cultural norm, promotora programs have been successfully established in Mexico and areas along the borders of the United States and other U.S. areas with high Latino populations (Keller, Fleury, Perez, Belyea, & Castro, 2011; Livaudais et al., 2010; McEwen, Pasvogel, Gallegos, & Barrera, 2010; O’Brien, Halbert, Bixby, Pimentel, & Shea, 2010; Waitzkin et al., 2011). A promotora program utilizes women in the community who are recognized as leaders and trains them to educate others within their community about selected health topics; such as depression, cervical cancer, diabetes self-care, and breast cancer prevention. The promotora understands the local dialect of the indigenous language and recognizes the cultural implications which influence how sensitive health issues are discussed (Elder et al., 2009; McEwen et al., 2010). By choosing a promotora from within the community, it reduces the cultural barriers that an “outsider” might face as he or she attempts to enter the community. This concept is very similar to programs which use community health workers to address health problems in low-income countries.

A promotora program is based on the concept of empowerment (Arizmendi & Ortiz, 2004). Women in marginalized populations are provided with knowledge and the tools to improve their own health and the health of people within their community. In the low-income countries where promotoras have been utilized, the women have limited literacy or education levels coupled with high rates of poverty. Many women have not been afforded the opportunities to attend school; therefore, they have not been exposed to health education topics that many educated populations take for granted. Not only does this lack of education influence how they make health care decisions for themselves and their families, it strongly influences their self-esteem. In a study conducted in Mexico (Venguer, Pick, & Fishbein, 2007), 39,000 women were educated by promotoras and rural health assistants over a period of 3 years regarding health and life skills. The program modules focused on basic health skills, adequate nutrition, proper hygiene, and reproductive health. Each module provided content related to agency; defined as the right of each woman to make her own decisions about health, her right to a healthy diet, her right to negotiate the work load at home, and her right to have control over her own sexual and reproductive health. Based on the study’s formal and informal findings, the program positively influenced both health and social well-being of the participants. An additional study was conducted in Guatemala using a similar format and content (Leenen et al., 2008) with 400 women. Their findings indicated that women expressed positive feelings about the value of the program and lead to decreased feelings of helplessness.

The international community adopted the Declaration of Alma Ata at the International Conference of Primary Health Care (1978), which spoke to the need to educate communities regarding basic sanitation, clean water, maternal and child health care, and the prevention of local endemic diseases. The Declaration promoted self-reliance in communities and advocated the use of community health workers to respond to the needs of low-income communities. Many countries heeded the call to action, but unfortunately recent years have seen a decrease in the number of programs being established in low-income countries to address easily treatable health problems, e.g., diarrhea and pneumonia. A renewed call to action has been directed by the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were established in September of 2010 (World Bank Group, 2011). The MDGs consist of 8 goals to significantly reduce poverty worldwide by 2015. Of particular interest are goals to improve child health by reducing the under-5 mortality rates through revitalized programs to control diarrhea and pneumonia, and to reduce maternal mortality ratios through access to skilled birth care and reproductive health services. Both the Declaration of Alma Ata and the MDGs are consistent with the concepts which support the use of promotoras. Promotoras are selected from within the local community, work and live in the community, and promote the idea of self-reliance as members of the community learn how to improve their own health with local resources. Providing education about sanitation, hygiene, clean water, and methods to reduce child and maternal mortality is well within the realm of the teaching skills of properly trained promotoras.

Establishing a Promotora Program

As a volunteer of a non-profit organization, I traveled to Guatemala to provide short-term medical care in rural communities in 2005. During my first trip to the Departamento de Sololá in
Guatemala, I was introduced to the community of Pixabaj and learned how the community had minimal access to health care or education. For the first time, a school was currently being built within the caserio (village) and would give children access to an education that had not existed for their parents or grandparents. As the school was emerging and expanding to meet the educational needs of the local children, I remained cognizant of the lack of local health care. The annual medical teams meet some of the immediate needs, yet they do little or nothing for the on-going or long-term health needs of the community. The health of the children and infants, in particular, continue to be a significant concern. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) (2011), the under the age of 5 child mortality rate in 2008 for Guatemala was 34 per 1000 live births compared to the United States rate of 7.8 per 1000 live births. Of the under-5 children who die, 20% of those deaths are related to pneumonia and 19% are related to diarrhea. Both conditions are easily treated if recognized early. Prematurity constitutes 19% of the under-5 mortality rate and is strongly influenced by the fact that only 31% of births are attended by skilled health personnel (WHO, 2011). Providing health education would be one way to empower the people of Pixabaj and help them to improve their own health.

The previously mentioned research studies have shown that promotora programs are effective for health promotion in Latino populations, both in the United States and Guatemala. This type of program could begin meeting some of the health education needs of Pixabaj. Without significant funding, I drew upon local resources and the generosity of students, peers, colleagues, and U.S. health care facilities to donate supplies and equipment. In the United States, many of the supplies and equipment that seem out-dated and useless are very valuable in a low-income country, such as Guatemala.

Being a faculty member in a baccalaureate nursing program permitted me to recruit 10 students to assist with the planning and development of the promotora program. Trip preparation included gathering health statistics (birth and death rates, infant mortality rates, major disease incidence rates, etc.) and conducting interviews with other medical professionals who had worked in Guatemala. My previous experiences in Pixabaj allowed for personal insight into the problems faced by this rural community. To ensure that students had a basic understanding of the culture, they were introduced to concepts of Guatemalan culture and the basics of Spanish language. For example, students were taught about the importance of family roles; health promotion practices; and the value of respect by health care providers. The introduction to the Spanish language included simple conversational phrases, such as greetings; introductions; directions; and questions.

Based on the health statistics and input from interviews, a plan was established to teach women within the Pixabaj community about basic hygiene, sanitation, vital signs (temperature, pulse, respirations, and blood pressure), first aid for wounds and burns, signs and symptoms of dehydration, directions for making oral rehydration solution, and how to differentiate between signs of pneumonia versus the common cold. According to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) (2010), only 64% of children under-5 with suspected pneumonia are taken to a health care provider. Earlier statistics reported by UNICEF indicated that only 22% of children under-5 with diarrhea received oral rehydration therapy (ORT) in Guatemala. Currently, no statistics are available for the use of ORT according to the 2005-2009 time frame. This lack of statistics may be reflective of the decreased focus on ORT by the Guatemalan health system in recent years. In a rural area where many parents are illiterate, these poor statistics are not surprising.

Recognizing that in order for the promotoras to be most successful, the community needed to select the women. Our in-country host collaborated with a local lay midwife, who was well-recognized as an informal health care leader, to recruit 10 women for the initial program prior to our arrival in Guatemala. Based on input from the midwife and members of the community, a total of 11 women attended the health education classes. This initial group included a local pastor’s wife, a lay midwife and her daughter, and a local school teacher; all of whom were well respected within the community.

Ten nursing students and I arrived in Guatemala on a Saturday afternoon. Since the following the day would be Sunday and Monday was a national holiday (November 1, All Saints Day), we could not begin our classes until Tuesday. At the time, it seemed an inconvenience as we were anxious to maximize our teaching time with the promotoras. In reality, this was a very opportune turn of events. On Sunday, we conducted home visits and attended the local church service. During
the church service, we were formally recognized and welcomed to the community by the pastor and community members. On Monday, we made more home visits and toured a local hospital. Although this hospital was considered local, it still required a 45-minute drive by personal vehicle to get there. Very few people in Pixabaj have access to a personal vehicle. Public buses are the most common method of transportation for most people in the area. This two-day delay turned out to be very important to our success. During this time, we learned a great deal about the daily lives of people living in Pixabaj and the lack of available resources of the community. The information we learned during our home visits allowed us to adapt our teaching plans to the specific needs of the local community. For example, few families have indoor plumbing therefore it was important to teach hygiene and sanitation based on the use of latrines. The trip to the local hospital re-enforced our plans to focus on problems of diarrhea and pneumonia. We saw first-hand the geographical isolation, the poverty, and the lack of transportation which influenced decisions to seek treatment of potential health problems.

Methods of Implementation

On Tuesday, we began our first promotora classes at the local school in one of the larger classrooms. Establishing a relationship is of the utmost importance in Guatemalan culture. We introduced ourselves and shared personal information about our lives, including some details of our families. Next, we asked the women to introduce themselves and tell us about their lives. Sharing personal details of ourselves and our families is consistent with the Latino value of personalismo, which emphasizes the importance of establishing personal relationships with health care professionals (Organista, 2007). We also asked the women to share with us how much school they had attended. Having this knowledge helped us to gauge the literacy levels of the women, so we could adapt our teaching as appropriate. As the leader of the group, I explained to the participants that we were there to teach them and also to learn about their culture during this week. Acknowledging that they had something to teach us was one way of demonstrating cultural humility.

Teaching began with the simplest information and built to the more complex procedures. For example, the first day we focused on handwashing, basic hygiene, and counting respirations. We used simple learning activities to reinforce learning, such as glitter to simulate germs and how they are passed from person-to-person on hands or inanimate objects. Although we came prepared to teach at low literacy levels, we were all taken by surprise that some of the women had never seen a watch. We anticipated that they would not own a watch; therefore, we had brought a watch with a second hand for each participant. How do you teach someone to count respirations if the person has never seen a watch? The nursing students were stunned momentarily, but they quickly adapted and used a large clock from the school kitchen to demonstrate how the second hand of a watch makes one complete rotation every minute. Using this demonstration, they taught the women how to count respirations for one full minute with a watch. Each subsequent day we added new information and built upon the content from the previous day. Each content area was re-enforced with demonstrations by the nursing students and return demonstrations by the participants. Certain content and procedures were modified and taught based on the ability and literacy levels of the women. For example, due to the limited literacy of certain women (women who had no formal schooling), we were not able to teach blood pressure procedures to everyone. For the women with extremely low literacy levels, we focused on the simplest procedures such as taking a temperature or counting respirations. Normal values and actions required for abnormal values were re-emphasized with games and repetition. For example, we used simple games such as Pin the Symptom of Dehydration on the Baby (a modified version of Pin the Tail on the Donkey). We used visual teaching aids to help the women recognize abnormal conditions associated with pneumonia and dehydration. Teaching with third-fourth grade level terminology seemed most appropriate for the majority of women. By the end of the third day, we were able to complete the teaching for all of our planned topics.

Reciprocity is an important component when working in a service capacity in communities. From the beginning, I expressed a desire for us to learn from the people of Pixabaj. On the last day, the local midwife brought her materials and taught us how she examined and cared for expectant mothers during the birthing process. The women of Pixabaj taught us about their local beliefs and use of folk medicine to treat common ailments. For example, intestinal parasites is a common etiology of diarrhea in Guatemala and many of the local families make a tea from a local
herb to treat for parasites. The students and I were encouraged to practice our Spanish skills. During our visit to the hospital in Sololá, we had the opportunity to visit a local market and cemetery to observe the rituals of All Saint’s Day. At the hospital, we talked with Guatemalan physicians and observed the differences in health care systems between Guatemala and the United States. Every encounter during this week provided a window to a new world and the lives of the indigenous people of Guatemala. Each student will be forever influenced by the experience with the potential to make a positive impact in their future careers as registered nurses as they work with an increasingly diverse client population. In a study by Amerson (2012), students who had taken part in similar international experiences during nursing school were able to provide culturally congruent care with patients following graduation and during their subsequent practice as registered nurses.

On the last day of class, we held a graduation ceremony for the promotoras. Before leaving the United States we had collected supplies for the promotoras to use as they provide care in their local communities. As my students and I hummed the graduation song, each promotora was presented with a certificate of participation and a nursing bag with scissors, a watch, bandages, soap, and other equipment they might use to promote health and prevent illness. A picture was taken of each woman as she was presented with her bag and certificate. Afterwards, we held a celebration with cake and punch. An unanticipated benefit of the program was the boost to the promotoras’ self-esteem. For the first time in their lives, they were recognized for their accomplishments outside the confines of their home. For some of these women, this was their first opportunity to ever attend school. They were empowered to learn about improving their own health and the health of the family.

In November of 2011, I returned with an additional group of nine nursing students to continue the education program. All of the initial promotoras from the first class returned, along with two additional women from the community. One woman was the wife of the local pharmacist who had heard about our program and the benefits to the women who had attended the previous year. The other woman was another lay midwife from the community. The teaching this second year re-enforced the content from the previous year and added information about potential carbon monoxide poisoning, which results from the use of temazcals (steam baths) (Thompson, Clark, Cadman, Canúz, & Smith, 2011). Temazcals are commonly used for bathing and spiritual purposes in the Highland regions of Guatemala among the Mayan people. This topic had to be approached in a highly sensitive manner in order to acknowledge the value of this spiritual practice; while educating them about the potential dangers particularly to infants, young children, and expectant mothers. For example, rather than suggesting that they stop using the temazcal for bathing, we educated them about the signs and symptoms of prolonged exposure to carbon monoxide and to limit their time in the temazcal.

**Evaluation of the Benefits**

Some colleagues doubted the effectiveness that a promotora program would have in this rural region. They felt that the low literacy levels and the language barriers would prevent us from having an impact. Literacy levels and language were barriers, but we were able to overcome them. Since this was a small-scale program, no formal research method of evaluation was conducted. This is not to say that we did not have a positive impact. Our impact was just not measured in a conventional manner.

Everyday each woman attended class, even though it meant a 2-hour walk round-trip for many of the women. At least two women brought their infants strapped to their backs and cared for their infants as they attended class. Each woman listened intently to the lectures and engaged in discussions. All of the students and the promotoras laughed and talked together about the issues that women face, regardless of their geographical location. During classroom breaks, the students and the promotoras shared snacks and played volleyball. The learning process was not just focused on learning content, but also on establishing personal relationships. The smiles on the faces of the promotoras as they received their certificates and nursing bags can never be measured by a survey. The expressions on their faces spoke volumes about the joy and the self-satisfaction of accomplishing something that would help themselves and their families. One participant shared with us:

> When the floods came and devastated our village, I felt so hopeless to help my neighbors. What could I do? I did not know what to do or have anything to use to help them. Now, I feel that I could help them with what I have learned this week.

Each participant personally thanked each
classes were the only reward that we needed. No, their kind words and willingness to come to our we had given them so much. We assured them that disturbed that they had nothing to give us since we had brought to their community. They were 

stood and expressed her sincere gratitude for what in the traditional clothing was a sign of respect style. For the women to dress the students and me they dressed my students and me in the traditional brought in her traditional clothing and as a group they shared the information with their neighbors. For example, one woman had recognized that her neighbor’s infant was exhibiting the signs of pneumonia and encouraged the family to seek medical treatment. As we reviewed the previous year’s content, we consistently observed behaviors that we had taught the previous year; such the correct procedure for handwashing. Handwashing seems such a low level skill; but in a country where many infants and children die from diarrhea and dehydration, it cannot be stressed enough. We also observed that the women with higher literacy skills were taking notes of the content that we covered. At least 2 of the women from the previous year had kept notebooks with the previous year’s information and were now adding to it. The school teacher requested our education materials (posters and handouts) at the end of the week, so that she could share it with students in her classroom.

Establishing and maintaining a relationship was a major emphasis for the program. It was clear that we had done this, but again it was not measured in a conventional manner. The first day of our return trip, we were greeted by the women with hugs and smiles. The women spoke excitedly about how happy they were that we had returned and were already talking about a return for the next year. On the second day of the classes, each woman brought in her traditional clothing and as a group they dressed my students and me in the traditional style. For the women to dress the students and me in the traditional clothing was a sign of respect and gratitude for our teaching. This also allowed us to share a part of their traditional Mayan culture. On the last day of the class, each woman stood and expressed her sincere gratitude for what we had brought to their community. They were disturbed that they had nothing to give us since we had given them so much. We assured them that their kind words and willingness to come to our classes were the only reward that we needed. No, we did not use t-tests, surveys, personal interviews, or focus groups to measure the results; but it was clear that we had made a positive impact. Recently, one of the students who had taken part in teaching the promotora classes emailed me. She was now working in labor and delivery and had recently cared for a newly immigrated Guatemalan woman. The student shared that her experiences in Guatemala had helped her to be more prepared to communicate with this patient. As the student wrote in her email, “I believe this was the most connected that I’ve been with a patient.”

Lessons Learned

The lessons learned from this international experience can be applied to both local and international settings. Gathering available health statistics about the community provides evidence of prevalent diseases and health conditions to be addressed through education. Both the World Health Organization and the Central Intelligence Agency provide health statistics by country which may prove useful in the planning phase. Health educators need to take time to observe the local conditions by visiting homes. Outsiders coming into a new community may believe that they understand the health needs of a community, but may fail to understand the cultural context and living conditions which influence healthcare decisions unless they visit the homes of community members. Interviewing and seeking the input of local health leaders, both formal and informal, allows them to become involved participants in the decision-making process. Obtaining the “blessing” (permission) of the community prior to entry into the community will help to promote a successful community program. In many collectivistic cultures, developing a personal relationship is a pre-requisite to task completion. A promotora program utilizes those personal relationships within the local community as a vehicle to promote health education. In our case, the in-country host was an accepted leader in the community and acted as a community liaison to facilitate communication between the health educator team and the community members. Each of these steps can be utilized when working in communities, regardless of the setting.

Conclusion and Implications

According to Domínguez and Arford (2010), social capital requires linking of marginalized people with ties to resources outside their community. While the relationship is usually vertical due to
the inequality on a socioeconomic scale, it has the potential to be very positive by bringing in new information to the local community. My students and I brought information to a local community who could benefit from our knowledge, but we also learned elements of their culture which would benefit us as we care for Latino cultures in the United States. The promotora program encourages bonding of social capital by utilizing the women of the community in their natural “caregiving” roles for their families, friends, and neighbors. In order to continue bridging social capital, we hope to begin working with a local Guatemalan school of nursing and local health practitioners.

Earlier research has demonstrated that promotora programs are effective in promoting emotional and physical health in Latino communities. This paper has focused on how these research findings have been translated into practice and used to address the health needs of a vulnerable population per the calls-to-action by Dr. Morin and Dr. Prevost. Nurses working in local communities within the United States need to consider establishing small promotora programs to address specific health needs of their Latino clients. The information shared here provides a roadmap for other nurses who desire to develop a culturally-based health promotion program. Nurse educators who recruit students for international experiences should consider developing on-going educational programs to address health problems in low-income countries.

From a research perspective, nurses should consider adapting the cultural aspects of a promotora program to meet the health needs of other immigrant populations within the United States. In order to accomplish this, the researcher will need to determine the cultural expectations of the target group. Using the health promoter concept with a different culture and adapting the educational intervention to take into account the unique expectations of the cultural group will provide rich insights into how different populations respond to health promotion interventions. Additional research is still needed to understand how promotoras function mostly effectively in working with clients who are experiencing chronic health conditions (Keller, Borges, Hoke, & Radasa, 2011). In the near future, we plan to conduct a more formal community evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the program in Guatemala. The use of promotora programs to educate the public has many relevant implications for both clinical practice and research.

On the last day of class, we asked for input about issues that the women wanted to learn in the upcoming year. Based on their health concerns and learning desires, the program will focus on the unique health problems of women and expectant mothers. This trip to Guatemala was not just a destination for my students and me. It is a journey that we will continue as we return in future years. Each return trip will build a stronger relationship and we will continue to improve family health as we educate the women of Pixabaj.

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**About the Author**

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The Power of Stories to Build Partnerships and Shape Change

Deborah Romero

Abstract

This essay reflects on the power of storytelling and narrative in a collaborative partnership that engaged undergraduate pre-service English as Second Language (ESL) candidates and their professor with local ESL high school teachers, immigrant and refugee students, and their families. It describes how undergraduate students worked with teachers and students to collect stories and publish a multilingual book about their journeys, memories of home, and transitions into their new life in the United States. This project and the resulting self-published book, which was shared at several community and public events, exemplify the fundamentals of reciprocal and transformative partnerships. The nature and importance of such partnerships are examined, including recommendations for similar undertakings, and a discussion about how the book students and families were empowered by sharing their voices. It closes by examining how the book became a tangible means to transcend the initial partnership and to promoting new understandings and relationships through sustained community engagement.

Introduction

When we narrate, we place lives in the balance in that our renderings of experience shape actions, beliefs and emotions. (Ochs & Capps, 1999, p. 1)

As I walked into the cluttered high-school classroom, tucked away in the most remote corner of the building, with no windows and too many desks in not enough space, Ms. Cooney sat sifting through a stack of tattered student papers and artwork. Despite the long days and challenging schedule, Jessica always had a smile and something positive to share about her immigrant and refugee students.

“Look at their stories! They’re just so powerful…And, they so want to share what they’ve been through,” she said, showing me the pile of papers. She went on to tell me that she was thinking of photocopying the stories written by students and their families as part of a Family Literacy Program and binding them together somehow so others could read and learn from them. It was then that the idea dawned upon me.

“Why not make a more formal book?” I asked and she looked at me as if I was crazy. How could she? How could this overworked, under resourced teacher make a book?

“We can do it!” I confidently began, and hastily went on to propose a plan for how the undergraduate students, who would soon be placed in her classroom that semester as part of their coursework with me, could support the book project. Although Jessica was skeptical at first, by the end of our conversation we were both inspired. We had conceptualized a reciprocal plan to collaborate, to partner and publish a book showcasing the students’ work and supporting the undergrads’ learning. Never could we have imagined back then just how powerful an experience it would turn out to be. This essay reflects on key parts of this transformative relationship and the process of making the book by considering the lessons learned and invites others interested to consider exploring these partnerships. I conclude with reflections on what kinds of change are possible when institutions and, more importantly, individuals come together to share stories.

Storytelling as a Vehicle for Transformative Partnerships

As increasingly more universities and faculty seek to develop meaningful ways to engage their students with local or global communities, the need to continually rethink the “what” and “how” we engage has also become ever more pressing. There is increasing demand not only to juggle the competing interests, needs and resources of campuses, faculty, and students with those of community partners (Ramaley, 2000), but also to develop meaningful pedagogies of engagement that can result in transformative, as opposed to transactional, relationships (Enos & Morton, 2003). Mindful of these considerations, and committed to nourishing participants’ aspirations, this story book project was able to bring about lasting changes by building on existing work and
partnerships around a shared vision, sustained interpersonal collaborations and engaged praxis (Stewart & Alrutz, 2012).

As an educational researcher, inspired by the theories and work of Freire (1970) and Dewey (1942) to promote engaged learning with my students interested in issues of language, literacy and identity development, I was convinced that making a book should be something more than a transactional project with stories, personal narratives and illustrations from immigrant and refugee high school students and their families. Rather, and through our ongoing planning and collegial discussions, Jessica and I began to envision how the book could become a living testimony to the lives, cultures and tremendous challenges that many of the immigrant students had overcome en route to their current situation. Furthermore, and as I shared with Jessica, this conviction was founded on the principle that much of how we learn and shape our experience is through narrative and storytelling, from everyday stories that children and adults include in daily conversations (Heath, 1983; Sacks, 1974) to great works of literature that embody a nation or culture. Stories are narrative acts of meaning making (Bruner, 1986), which allow both the teller and the audience to engage in a shared experience of lived and imagined worlds, or as Morrison (1994) states, “narrative is radical, creating us at the very moment that it is being created.”

The power of storytelling, along with oral histories, is recognized in a growing body of work that explores these as legitimate vehicles for both community engagement and for raising awareness about cultural diversity and social justice issues (Fraizer, 1997; Meyers, 2010; Rosaldo, 1986; Solinger, Fox, & Irani, 2008). Oral histories have a rich tradition, especially in anthropological work and folklore studies, where through in-depth interviews participants share powerful testimonies comprised mainly of “memories and personal commentaries” (Ritchie, 2007), which although they may carry historical significance, do not necessarily depict the “facts.” Rather, oral histories and storytelling seek to engage the listener or reader in a shared experience, the narration of past events that connect to the author’s present existence. The stories gathered for this project are very much in this vein; they are personal, subjective recollections of individuals’ lived experiences and their relationship to history. These narratives “tell us less about events and more about their meaning (…), not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did,” (Portelli, 2003, p. 67). By printing these stories, told by traditionally marginalized adolescents and their families, in an illustrated book that was subsequently shared by them as authors with community audiences, this project is both unique and transformative in nature. In effect, publishing and disseminating the stories in a book transcended the self-interests of any one individual or group involved and helped to create larger meanings, not only about individuals but also about group and community identities (Enos & Marten, 2003).

Cultivating Transformative Collaborations in Changing Times

Through my instructional work in teacher preparation at the local university, I had been placing my undergraduate pre-service English as Second Language (ESL) undergraduates in Ms. Cooney’s classroom to conduct their practicum teaching experiences for several years. A former high school teacher myself, I understood all too well the challenges she faced, and I valued her practical and professional experience. Consequently, I made deliberate efforts to ensure our partnership was reciprocal; I would often invite Ms. Cooney and her high-school students to visit campus and attend my classes, where they would engage with the college students. This provided the high-school students with meaningful opportunities to practice their emergent English language skills, while briefly experiencing college life. I also co-presented with Ms. Cooney at local and state education forums and conferences, and I made sure that she received the best pre-service teachers to support her students in class and with any extra curricular activities. In return, Ms. Cooney always welcomed the college students into her classes, modeled for them excellence in teaching and appreciated the extra support she received for the growing numbers of ESL students.

In the five years I had been working with Ms. Cooney, I watched her classroom demographics change from predominantly Latinos, often of Mexican descent, to a majority of refugee students, mainly from Somalia, Kenya and Burma. U.S. Census data from 2010 show that in our midwestern community the fastest growth has been for the minority population. The local school district experienced a 47% increase in Hispanics (total of 33,440) and an astounding 129% increase in East African refugees (total 1,543). In addition, Hispanics now comprise almost 36%
of the local K–12 school population. As teachers, students, educators and a community at large, how we adapt to this change and difference defines who we are, both as individuals and as society.

These demographic shifts brought with them linguistic and sociocultural changes that in turn made extra demands on Jessica and other English as Second Language teachers, altering the instructional context and dynamics in many classrooms. In order to address these changes, Jessica and some of her colleagues began seeking out ways to help the newcomer students better integrate into the schools and classrooms. To this end, a few years ago they initiated a theater group, El Teatro that engaged students in a stage production, where they told their stories and shared their experiences as recent immigrants in this country.

Each year many of my undergraduate pre-service teachers participated and helped with El Teatro, and I personally coordinated and worked to bring El Teatro group to perform on our college campus on several occasions. Inspired by the power and impact that sharing stories through theater had on students and the community audiences, the teachers went on to develop a series of Family Literacy events for English language learners, new comers, immigrant students, and their families. This was how Jessica came about that first pile of stories.

For Jessica and the teachers, it was important to involve the families since they observed how quickly the students became Americanized, empowered by their knowledge of English and their ability to navigate the American society. As students did so, they tended to pull away from their families and parents who may not have acculturated to the same degree. By engaging families in the storytelling process the teachers sought to reconnect the students with their families and allow them to share who they are and where they came from.

The story book project, as it soon came to be known by those of us working together, and the process of gathering the stories with the immigrant and refugee high school students and their families to make the book, brought together a range of participants in what might be considered a form of participatory or collaborative action research project (Valenzuela & Foley, 2005). The organic and emergent nature of the project and its undertaking was founded on the “unwritten” principles of a transformative partnership, whereby as participants we were “able to combine (their) resources to address mutually defined problems in more dynamic and comprehensive ways” (Stewart & Alrutz, 2012, p. 47). The project involved the present author as a faculty member in Hispanic Studies; a department committed to diversity and equal education for Latino and other minority students. My role was mainly coordinator, overviewing the logistics, serving as editor and working with teachers on the compilation of texts and images, and of course, cheerleader at times of frustration and desperation. In addition to Jessica, two additional English as Second Language teachers from a nearby school collaborated to design and implement the family literacy events. Approximately ten pre-service ESL undergraduate students, many of whom were in class with me at the time, supported the teachers and about thirty students and families from the local community who participated. All families and students participated on a volunteer basis and informed consent was obtained to use their stories, artwork or images in the publication.

In order to ensure a variety of voices and stories for the book we decided to gather additional stories, texts and illustrations to expand upon those in the first pile, during subsequent small group family literacy sessions. The meetings, which often dovetailed with other educational or social support events such as preventive health care talks, community resource sessions or teacher presentations, were frequently held in the local high schools and in the community at convenient locations, often a community center or a family’s home or apartment. The collaborative storytelling sessions served also to build community and shared understanding through the narration and composition of the stories. In order not to impose a given or expected account, the stories were elicited through the use of verbal requests in English such as “Tell us about your journey to the United States” and other written prompts, including an “I am…” poem stem, used to help scaffold the structure of sentences for those students who needed more support with their English. The prompts sought to spark memories about the home country, reasons for leaving and feelings about being in the United States. The composition process was supported by the undergraduate pre-service ESL teachers, who assisted as scribes by writing down what students and families desired to share and by serving as an authentic audience for families’ oral narrations and reflections.

The collaborative and reciprocal nature of the story project not only strengthened university-community links but also solidified a visible
commitment to increase diversity outreach between the institution, the local schools and the district. It provided an excellent service learning opportunity for the pre-service teachers and undergraduate students who were involved and supported our university wide vision of preparing students in the liberal arts tradition and helping them “to think and act responsibly in a dynamic, diverse and global society,” (www.unco.edu/pres/mission.html). Through their engagement with multicultural content and other forms of interdisciplinary inquiry (educational, linguistic, political, and socioeconomic, to name just a few), entailed in this collaborative book project, undergraduate students benefited from significantly enriched academic experiences.

More specifically, these community based learning experiences exposed the undergraduate students to exemplary high quality teachers in the field of ESL who modeled professional practice and collaboration, which in turn provided invaluable interactions and insights into working with ESL students and their families, both in and out of school. This participation enabled the undergraduate students to further develop their linguistic and professional knowledge to understand and support language learners, to increase their instructional and teaching skills, and to enhance their dispositions toward culturally and linguistically diverse populations by working in collaboration with others. This learning also included an appreciation of how to build and develop home-school partnerships and a practical understanding of advocacy for and with students, all aspects that are related to national teacher standards concerning culture and educational professionalism. Jenny, a junior elementary education major with an emphasis in ESL when asked about this experience, informed the campus newspaper, “I now have a heart for people I knew very little about. I learned more about their lives from being welcomed into their homes. I was shocked at how many people live in one home, how little they have, how welcoming they are and how much they love each other” (Allison, 2012).

The Nature of Telling Tales: Stories of Transition, Resilience, and Hope

Once the stories had been hand written, an electronic archive of all the participants’ work was created, again with the collaboration of the undergraduate students, who brought technological and linguistic expertise. I met regularly and worked with the teachers to review the electronic archive. First independently and then collectively, we sorted and selected representative stories, narratives and artwork for inclusion in the final book. We grouped the texts by major themes that emerged in the stories and writing: Culture and Family, Life Histories and Memories, War Refugee Stories, and Transition and Resilience. Each of these themes forms a chapter in the book, punctuated with “I am” poems written by students from all cultural groups. With the additional support of an undergraduate student in journalism, and another recent graduate from educational technology, the texts and artwork were then compiled into a master file using InDesign®. The result: a multilingual multimodal manuscript, complete with photographs and illustrations that depict families, students and others writing, sharing and learning together. This file was then uploaded to the online publishing resource, www.blurb.com® for publication.

The final published book, entitled Telling Tales, contains a comprehensive selection of stories, tales and artwork produced by students and families, and was self-published in less than a year with support from donations, a small grant and monies raised through El Teatro. In many ways the book can be considered phenomenological in nature (Greene, 1997) because it seeks to understand the lived experiences of others and to value these as important and real phenomena, represented through participants’ conscious and very personal narrations about events and circumstances that led them to their current place. Accordingly, the book was conceptualized to promote and enhance the immigrant and refugee English language learners’ use of English for authentic and meaningful communication. Therefore, only minimal edits were made to the language used and even then only in order to ensure clarity or avoid ambiguities. Stories and texts were published in English, Spanish, Somali, Arabic, Thai and Karen, thus promoting multilingual literacies in our community. The texts, although written in beginner English, are indeed complex and telling; they reflect the voices and language learning acquisition stages of all authors. The texts illustrate the diversity of English and other languages that exist in today’s world, and while they range considerably in content, grammatical correctness and style, their messages are nonetheless comprehensible and captivating. By providing students and families with real audiences and the opportunity to envision themselves and their stories in a published volume, each of the authors was ultimately able to make-meaning not only
of their past history but also to transform their academic identities and sense of social success.

Reflections on the Power of Story

Storytelling and narrative are widely acknowledged as powerful vehicles in education (Dyson & Genishi, 1994; Martínez-Roldán, 2003) both for the expression of ideas and as sites for future learning. In fact story genres, narrative and personal histories are all recognized in the Colorado State K-12 state content standards. In reading and writing students are required to “write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences” including for example, “generating topics and developing ideas for a variety of writing and speaking purposes.” In the content standards for History, students are also required to “understand that societies are diverse and have changed over time.” This includes the ability to create “a brief historical narrative that chronologically organizes people and events in the history of their family heritage, school, neighborhood, local community, or State Name,” (State Content Standards). Students are also expected to be able to describe “the interactions and contributions of the various peoples and cultures that have lived in or migrated, immigrated, or were brought to the area that is now the United States, including African, Asian, European, Latino, and Native American” and to explain “the reasons for major periods of immigration to the United States and describing how different segments of U.S. society reacted and changed” (Colorado State Content Standards for History).

In practice, however, there are very few, if any, opportunities or resources in place in most schools to support the publication or dissemination of students’ stories or written work beyond the classroom, let alone opportunities for outside audiences to hear or learn from the stories. Cognizant of this situation, the story book project sought to make a difference and, in so doing, it accomplished much more. Specifically, this project illustrates how strong collaborative partnerships foster and promote integrated learning experiences. These include “rich and meaningful” multilingual language development and students’ increased motivation to participate. In addition the book experience built authentic connections to national learning standards and raised awareness of sociocultural diversity and global issues (Barreneche & Ramos-Flores, 2013).

Indeed, the story book project developed from a collaborative and community building partnership into a genuinely transformative experience not only for those directly involved but also for the greater community. By gathering stories from a diverse range of immigrants, individuals from more familiar backgrounds such as Latinos from Mexico and South America, as well as students and families from other groups about whom we are less knowledgeable, for example refugees from Somalia, Kenya and East Africa and also those from Burma and South East Asia, the community was able to hear a diversity of peoples whose voices are often unheard. Another significant outcome, supporting the power of stories to help individuals heal and overcome difficulties (Herman, 1997), concerns how the participants from traditionally disenfranchised groups were empowered as they made meaning of their experiences through the almost cathartic-like process of telling and (re) producing their personal narratives. Through the story book process their voices and perspectives, which are frequently not heard or seen, became available to a broader community of teachers, students, scholars and interested readers. One student, Amina, later reflected in an interview that the experience gave her a greater sense of control and self-assertion (Sharf & Vanderford, 2003). She described how, “Telling someone our stories kind of helps you. When walking around, I don’t feel different any more, they know who I am now.”

When other students were asked what it meant to see their stories in print in the published book they too were motivated and empowered. For Faisal, publishing his story allowed him to think about his past but also to imagine a future. He explained: “I just learned a little better, which gave me ideas that I can actually write more by myself or in my future I can be a writer or something like that, publish my own book.” Asha, a senior in high school described how: “It was awesome being in a book because I have never been in a book before. Seeing people tell others about our stories and how the book talks about who we really are and where we came from and what we have been through. Sharing that with them and teaching them who [sic] our model is and not judging us. It’s really great and awesome!”

As these students attested, the compilation of these multilingual and multicultural stories was a beneficial and authentic endeavor. The stories helped students “to develop a sense of shared humanity, to understand themselves and how they resemble and how they differ from other people, over time and space; to question stereotypes of others, and of themselves; to discern the difference...
between fact and conjecture…” (Colorado State Content Standards for History).

The story book project described here is testimony to what can be accomplished in a strong reciprocal partnership, which occasioned authentic and constructive community built learning opportunities and exemplified the potential benefits inherent in university-community partnerships (Roehlkepartain & Bailis, 2007). These benefits can be summarized as follows: 1) Participants were able to increase their social capital; students, teachers and community strengthened the existing social networks and developed new ones, especially on campus at the university, 2) Teachers and students were able to accomplish a task that was difficult to address alone; bringing the stories to publication and sharing them with public audiences would not have been possible without this collaborative partnership, 3) Community partners’ voices were respected; the publication and the nature of how the texts were reproduced in a multilingual format and with regards to the emergent English honored participants’ academic and sociocultural identities, 4) Resources, skills, and knowledge were shared; as a genuinely collaborative and mutually beneficial project, all participants learned with and from each other, and 5) Our institution of higher education was grounded and connected to community realities on varying levels; through the faculty-teacher relationship, through undergraduates’ participation and learning experience with high-school students, families and communities and subsequently, through the campus book tour, described below, and the university news coverage following the event. In addition to these gains, this project invites consideration about the impact generated by the book, a durable product that extended beyond those who told their stories and into the audiences and readers of other students, teachers, and general public.

As local communities and classroom demographics continue to change dramatically, we need to seek out meaningful ways to engage not only pre-service and in-service teachers with K-12 students, but also society at large. As faculty in the field of undergraduate ESL, we embrace a multicultural approach and have traditionally put particular emphasis on understanding our Latino population. However, if future educators are to develop the social and cultural capital, along with the linguistic and pedagogical principles required to teach diverse and underrepresented students, they need to be able to empathize and understand students’ backgrounds and lived experiences.

Engagement in collaborative community based learning, like the project described here, is one way to promote teacher and student development. In this regard, the book project through the storytelling, book readings, and subsequent coverage both in the local paper and university publications, as well as a conference presentation, all helped to transcend the immediate interests of the participants and extended an increased understanding and meaning into far broader communities. We all benefit from these undertakings and when we engage in and develop mechanisms that foster multilingual and multicultural dialogue and raise awareness, we shape new understandings of our community members and of ourselves. This reciprocal partnership and community based learning produced not only a book, a tangible product, but also a “material symbol for the new relationships” (Crabtree, 2008), that is relevant and insightful for current and future teachers, as well as community audiences.

For academics and others interested in developing similar community partnerships, be it a book project or other product, local schools and teachers are excellent starting points. Most are anxious for extra support and are looking for creative ways to engage and promote literacies and learning. For teachers and educators looking to partner with institutions of higher education and faculty, approach the colleges or units where you feel comfortable, ask for volunteers to visit your classroom or read with your students. Arrange a visit to the campus, get your students connected to college students. For all participants, try to begin where you have contacts, where you are most at ease and have some sense of the context. Visit frequently; get involved with the college, the school, the teachers, and their students. Build trust and respect. Ask questions. Identify individual and collective strengths and assets, as well as potential needs and concerns. Collaborate to determine the nature and form of the product: a book, a mural, a pamphlet, maybe even a performance. Where possible, connect new proposals to ongoing initiatives and projects. Collaboratively establish a goal and a plan with reciprocal benefits for all parties. But most of all, be prepared for the unexpected, for the new and inspiring stories that will inevitably re shape the experience for you and others.

**The Story Beyond the Book**

Although initially it seemed that the ultimate goal in this partnership was to produce the book,
this work and its impact does not end there. Soon after students received their copies of the book I met with Jessica. Moved with emotion, she explained how two refugee sisters had told her that their mother was brought to tears of joy when she saw their pictures and story in the book. Inspired by these powerful reactions, I began working with our campus library and others to coordinate an on site book reading with the teachers and students. A few weeks later, we hosted an evening reception and book launch in our majestic library.

The teachers arrived early with the students, who were excited yet nervous to be around the growing crowd of academics and college students. After a few introductory words, I turned the microphone over to Jessica, who with much pride and enthusiasm called on the students to come forward and read their stories. Shy at first, but with their confidence increasing after each applause, the fifteen students read excerpts from their texts and stories. Eventually, a young woman dressed in her colorful Hijab, a junior and recent refugee stepped forward, and in her best English read her poem that graces the back cover of the book.

I am Amina
I wonder if I could help anyone who needs help?
I hear people screaming for help
I see sometime terrible things that I can’t do anything about it
I am dreamer
I pretend that I’m a doctor or a helper
I feel safe and happy
I worry about my relatives
I cry when I remember some of my parent happened to them
I am student
I understand bounds of troubles
I say I can make it
I dream about my future
I try to help other
I hope I’ll reach my goals
I am Amina as I always was
I wonder why some people like to harm others
I am Amina

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The event was well attended and subsequently reported in the university campus newsletter, where Amina was quoted as saying that writing the book was therapeutic for herself, her classmates and their families, “We hope that once people read our stories, they will finally know and understand who we are.”

Shortly after this event, the teachers, students and I were invited to make a special presentation at the local school district’s Board of Education meeting. So impressed was the board that they guaranteed to put a copy of the book in every school library in the district. In the fall of the same year, the teachers and I presented our work at a state level education conference. Not long after the conference, I returned on one of my regular visits to Jessica’s classroom. She greeted me with her usual warm smile and raised a pile of papers that she held in her hand.

“Students are asking, ‘When can we publish another book?’ They too want to see their stories in print!” I smiled and knew what we had to do. But that’s a whole other story.

References


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“Beyond My Imagination”: Learning the Sociology of Poverty Through Service After the Tuscaloosa Tornado

Ariane Prohaska

Abstract
In recent years, educators from diverse academic disciplines have created service learning courses in response to natural disasters. However, sociology courses have been slow to integrate service learning after disasters. In this paper, the learning experiences of fourteen students enrolled in a service learning course during the Fall 2011 semester at the University of Alabama are analyzed, four months after the April 27, 2011 tornado event. In this course, entitled Gender and Poverty, students were required to volunteer 30 hours over a 10-week period with an organization that assisted tornado survivors in addition to attending weekly class meetings and completing class assignments. Despite initial difficulties finding interactive service experiences for the students, post-tests and journal assignments indicated a shift in students’ explanations of poverty from mostly individual-level explanations to structural explanations of poverty. The service experience also emotionally transformed the students, who through their service efforts, developed empathy for storm survivors.

Introduction
The tornadoes of April 27, 2011 brought great destruction to the Deep South. An EF4 tornado left 53 people dead and approximately 1,000 injured in Tuscaloosa County, Alabama alone. The tornado left 5,362 residences damaged or decimated in its path. The storms pre-emptively ended the semester at the University of Alabama, and many students whose permanent homes were located outside of Tuscaloosa left the city without witnessing the extent of the damage in their college town.

Despite the horrible destruction that natural disasters can inflict on communities, tornadoes and other similar events can provide unique opportunities to connect classroom learning to real-world situations. Colleges and universities have assisted in recovery efforts after Hurricanes Floyd (Steiner & Sands, 2000) and Katrina (Domangue & Carson, 2008; Mehta & Sukumaran, 2007; Richards, Novak, & Davis, 2009; Schuleenberg et al., 2008) and the Christchurch, New Zealand earthquake (O’Steen & Perry, 2012), applying their specialized skills in medicine, engineering, and nursing to contribute to relief efforts. Despite an emerging body of research about the social consequences of natural disasters (Bolin, 2006; Fothergill & Peek, 2004), there is a lack of research describing how service after a natural disaster can assist students’ learning of sociological concepts.

After the Tuscaloosa tornado, the service component of the service learning course, entitled Gender and Poverty, was revisited to allow students to directly assist individuals affected by the tornado. By the time the tornado had wreaked havoc on Tuscaloosa, courses were already scheduled for Fall 2011, so the name of the course could not be changed. However, students’ service opportunities could be reorganized to assist with recovery efforts. Although learning outcomes did not change, students would now study the sociological perspectives on poverty by reading applicable course materials and by completing service projects in areas of Tuscaloosa where the destruction was most widespread.

This paper describes the experiences of students who participated in the Gender and Poverty sociology course during the Fall of 2011. First, the paper reviews the sociological perspectives on poverty that students were introduced to during the course. Second, the scholarship pertaining to the benefits of service learning for students is examined. Third, the service component of the course is described. Finally, the service component of the course is evaluated based on how assisting tornado survivors affected student learning and student attitudes towards people experiencing poverty, using pre- and post-test assessments, journal entries, and personal communication with students as evidence. Analysis of the data show that despite some initial difficulties, the service learning component of the course contributed to students’ comprehension of the scope of the destruction caused by the storm. Students were also able to understand and apply structural explanations of poverty and change their attitudes towards impoverished people, resulting in student...
support for policies designed to alleviate poverty.

**Sociological Perspectives on Poverty**

Scholars who study poverty offer two main perspectives to explain why individuals are poor: individual and structural level views of poverty (for a detailed review, see Eitzen & Eitzen Smith, 2010). There are two major types of individual-level poverty explanations. The first states that the poor lack the ability and motivation to achieve wealth because of innate differences from their non-poor counterparts. Proponents of this perspective, most notably Social Darwinist Herbert Spencer, assert that because people who are poor are genetically disadvantaged, supporting policies to alleviate poverty is futile (Eitzen & Eitzen Smith, 2010). The other major individual-level explanation of poverty is the cultural inferiority thesis, also known as the culture of poverty perspective. Proponents of this explanation believe that people who are poor adapt to poverty by developing lifestyles that are in opposition to larger cultural norms. Because they have adjusted to being poor, they believe that poverty is normal and inescapable. People experiencing poverty are viewed by society as complicit in perpetuating their own poverty. The culture of poverty thesis purports that an underclass exists made up of mostly inner-city minorities who have separate value systems typified by nonmarital births, criminal behavior, welfare dependency, and drug use. The solution to poverty, supporters argue, is to change patterns of socialization that are supportive of these allegedly deviant lifestyles (Eitzen & Eitzen Smith, 2010).

On the contrary, the structural perspective explains poverty as a result of events that are out of a person’s control, and is the current sociological paradigm for explaining poverty (Eitzen & Eitzen Smith, 2010). Proponents of this view believe that low wages, lack of adequate educational training, replacement of workers with machines, outsourcing, and discrimination (both current and historical), among other issues, result in the perpetuation of poverty. The structural view also asserts that poverty is exacerbated by crises. Divorce, disaster, illness, and war can lead otherwise hard-working individuals into poverty.

An abundance of sociological research supports the structural perspective on poverty. A 2013 report completed by the Corporation for Enterprise Development shows that 43.9% of people are one missed paycheck away from financial disaster (http://assetsandopportunity.org/assets/pdf/2013_Scorecard_Report.pdf). Women who experience divorce earn 50% less income the year following their divorces, compared with a one-third increase in economic well-being for their male counterparts (Bianchi, Subaiya, & Kahn, 1999). And, most relevant to this paper, natural disasters can affect individuals’ financial well-being in various ways (for a review, see Fothergill & Peek, 2004). The effects of hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, earthquakes, and other disasters are exacerbated when individuals are already struggling to make ends meet. Researchers have found that being poor, female, a person of color, elderly, and/or an immigrant increases one’s likelihood of negative outcomes following a natural disaster, such as losing a home or job or losing a loved one (Fothergill & Peek, 2004). These accumulated stressors not only lead to profound emotional outcomes for disaster survivors, but also affect the financial well-being of families who have experienced natural disasters (Bolin, 2006; Fothergill & Peek, 2004). People without homeowner’s or renter’s insurance suffer the greatest financial hardship. Additionally, individuals outside city limits, who tend to have lower socioeconomic statuses, wait longer for assistance than their city-dwelling counterparts (Fothergill & Peek, 2004).

**Benefits of Service Learning for Students**

Evidence reveals that there are numerous positive intellectual and personal outcomes for students who enroll in service learning courses (for an extended review, see Astin, Sax, & Ávalos, 1999; Eyler et al., 2003). For example, students who participated in service learning courses reported a having a better understanding of the connection between course material and the real world (Astin et al., 1999; Eyler et al., 2003). Measurements of students’ critical thinking skills revealed improvement as a result of participating in these types of courses (Astin et al., 1999; Eyler et al., 2003). Students also claimed feeling empowered and having an increased awareness of the social realities of their communities, while also growing spiritually and morally as a result of their service learning experiences (Astin et al., 1999; Eyler et al., 2003). Students who participated in service learning described developing trust in others, appreciating diversity, and developing a sense of pride in their communities (Astin et al., 1999; Boyte & Farr, 1997). Service learning students also developed tolerance for individuals from different racial, cultural, and economic backgrounds (Astin et al., 1999; Eyler et al., 2003; Moely, McFarland, Miron, Mercer, & Ilustre, 2002;
Sanders, McFarland, & Bartolli, 2003; Simons & Cleary, 2006). These students have also reported an interest in developing solutions to social problems as a result of participating in service learning courses (Astin et al., 1999; Eyler et al., 2003).

Providing assistance to individuals in need after a natural or man-made disaster can also be therapeutic to the volunteers. Interviews conducted by Lowe and Fothergill (2003) after 9/11 revealed the healing effects of assisting during this crisis. One subject noted,

I think psychologically [volunteering is] a very good thing to do because you’re able to work through a lot of the problems in a very constructive way and in a way you help affect the recovery, even if it’s just making beds. …It’s not that glamorous or glorious or anything but it’s healthy, it’s very healthy (p. 305).

Members of communities that have experienced destruction but were not physically harmed or did not experience financial loss have reported psychological healing through volunteering. Additionally, those being assisted have reported that being able to share their disaster experiences with volunteers was cathartic (Crabtree, 2009; Puig & Glynn, 2003). Service learning, then, results in mutual empowerment (Crabtree, 2009): helping disaster survivors with basic needs not only empowers the survivors, but also allows those volunteering to heal, and inspires students to be more aware of the social justice issues surrounding them.

Characteristics of the Course

After making the decision that the service component of this course should center on tornado relief, the first step was finding a community partner focused on tornado relief. The University of Alabama Center for Ethics and Social Responsibility (CESR) suggested a volunteer effort working from a church in Holt, an unincorporated community in Tuscaloosa County, just outside of the City of Tuscaloosa. The focus of this non-profit, start-up relief project (for which I will use the pseudonym the Tornado Recovery Project) was rebuilding Holt and assisting its residents to meet basic needs. The population of Holt in 2010 was 3,638 residents (http://www.city-data.com/city/Holt-Alabama.html), and the median household income in 2009 was $26,095, much lower than the median income of the state of Alabama, which was $40,489 in that same year. The racial makeup of Holt is 55.1% African American, 36.2% White, 7.2% Hispanic, and 1.5% another race or races. The residents of Holt, then, could be defined as mostly poor or working class: those individuals “one crisis away” from poverty before the tornado. Holt is far enough from the Tuscaloosa city center to assume that most students had never visited or had even driven through the town unless they were residents of Tuscaloosa County. Additionally, Holt endured widespread damages from the April 27, 2011 Tuscaloosa tornado. According to the Holt in Action report, 247 houses, 114 mobile homes, four churches, and one school were completely destroyed (Holt in Action, 2012). The recovery effort would be long and arduous, and groups like the Tornado Recovery Project were assisting with immediate needs and long term planning. It is important to note that the Tornado Recovery Project was created solely to assist in the rebuilding of Holt and had no other ties to the Holt community or to the University prior to its establishment immediately following the April 27th, 2011 tornado outbreak.

The Tornado Recovery Project allowed 14 students from the Gender and Poverty course to volunteer for 30 hours during the Fall Semester of 2011, four months after the tornado. For the most part, students would be answering from individuals in the neighborhood who had tornado related concerns. Students with particular skills were told that they could help with physical recovery, such as rebuilding of homes. Of greatest importance to the development of this course was that students were assured that they would have opportunities to interact with storm survivors during their service. Assessment techniques, such as journals, were constructed around the assumption that students would be interacting with storm survivors. Unfortunately, although students were promised plenty of work and interaction with community residents, most students did not have these opportunities. This was neither the fault of the students nor the community partner, and possible reasons for the lack of interactive opportunities will be discussed later in this paper. After some communication with the Tornado Recovery Project leaders and the CESR at UA, over half of the students in the class (N = eight) stopped working with the Tornado Recovery Project and signed up to work with other community organizations. By week four of the course, students were performing service at Team-up, Holt in Action, Temporary Emergency Services, Habitat for Humanity, and
the Salvation Army. Each student who moved on to a new project assisted with the disaster relief efforts of these organizations. For example, one student volunteered with the Salvation Army’s Angel Tree Project, which solicited donations for Christmas gifts for children who survived the tornado. Once new projects were chosen, these students had opportunities to interact with not just storm survivors, but other marginalized members of the Tuscaloosa community.

Method
Data Collection
The data for this project included assignments completed by students in the Gender and Poverty course during Fall 2011. Two sources of data were analyzed to assess how the service learning experience affected student learning: student journal entries and pre- and post-test assessments. The assignment description for the journal entries asked students to “help consider, reflect upon, and learn from the readings and your experiences with your service project.” Students completed ten journal entries throughout the semester. Pre- and post-test assessments were identical, and students completed these on the first and last day of class, respectively. Here, I focus on two questions from this assessment: (1) Why are people poor? In other words, what causes poverty? List as many reasons you can; and (2) Is there anything that you would recommend to leaders and policymakers that you think would best help those in poverty? Students were informed about the study after all assessments were completed, and were asked to consent to the analysis of their course materials. All student names used in the analysis are pseudonyms.

Data Analysis
The data were analyzed to answer two research questions: (1) How did the service learning experience impact students? (2) Did students’ explanations for poverty change from the beginning to the end of the course? Both qualitative and quantitative analyses of student assignments are presented. In order to answer the first research question, the principal investigator and research assistant analyzed journal entries for emerging themes. Although the coders labeled particular themes differently (e.g. empathy vs. understanding the poor), both coders agreed that three themes emerged from the data. To answer the second research question, student pre- and post-tests were analyzed to assess changes in how the students explained poverty and people who are poor from before the course to its completion. All responses were coded for either individual- or structural-level explanations by the principal investigator and research assistant. There was complete agreement between the coders about placement of student responses into individual- or structural-level categories. These answers to both research questions are explained in detail in the paragraphs below.

Results
As stated previously, journals for all students were analyzed for themes regarding how the service experience affected them both personally and intellectually. Students described their unique service experiences, but among these entries several commonalities materialized. The most common themes that emerged from the students’ journals were a grasp of the magnitude of the destruction of the tornado, frustration with the service opportunities provided, and empathy. Each theme is discussed in detail and situated within the current scholarship on service learning.

Grasp of the Magnitude of the Tornado
The first service visit to Holt was eye-opening for most of the students who had not seen the damage the tornado caused outside of the city limits. Of the 14 students, six expressed shock upon seeing Holt’s storm damages. Wendy, a senior, stated “I could not believe my eyes” driving to the project site. She noted, “the area was completely hit and the only thing standing seemed to be the church.” Megan, also a senior, stated that she was “in tears. My response was similar to when I saw the full aftermath of the tornado in June. I knew the magnitude of the tornado, but the extreme damage that was caused was beyond my imagination.” Shannon, a senior, described Holt as “very sad. There is not much there anymore.”

The students at the University of Alabama are centrally located in the city of Tuscaloosa, and there are not many reasons to drive outside of the city limits. In the classroom, students read Fothergill & Peek’s (2004) article that showed that these areas are the last to receive assistance and are often ignored by the larger, immediate disaster responses. These areas often rely on nonprofit assistance in order to get back to normal functioning. Like the students, the media often forgets that large portions of land outside the city are hard hit, and thus relief efforts are mostly focused on the larger metropolitan areas. Additionally, Bolin’s (2006) review of the role of race and ethnicity in
that in order for a campus-community partnership to prosper, a mutual worldview or goal for the community was necessary. However, the structural explanations of poverty that students were learning in the course were incompatible with the ideas about people who are experiencing poverty shared by the students’ supervisor at the Tornado Recovery Project. The supervisor revealed to the students that she believed many residents who were receiving assistance from Tornado Recovery Project were making poor decisions. Her individual-level views on poverty contradicted lessons the students were learning in class, and perhaps influenced some of the students’ decisions to provide service elsewhere. Indeed, many students discussed her comments in their journals, mostly remarking that they disagreed with her views about the Holt residents.

Another explanation for the incompatibility between the course and the community partner may be due to the fact that successful campus-community collaborations are typically developed over long periods of time (Holland & Gelmon, 1998). As mentioned earlier, the Tornado Recovery Project was generated in response to the tornado of April 27, 2011, so the organization did not have existing relationships with the University of Alabama or the Holt community. Thus, another criterion for a successful campus/community partnership, establishing trust through interpersonal relationships (Torres & Schaffer, 2003), was missing from this collaboration. Bringle & Hatcher (2002) maintained that campus-community partnerships are akin to romantic relationships, which must be nurtured through constant “communication, respect, and coordinated action towards goals” (p. 506). Similar to a romantic partnership, the relationship between the campus and the community partner must be terminated when “a partnership…initially had satisfying qualities, but is no longer meeting expectations” (p. 512).

The experiences students confronted at The Tornado Recovery Project presented a challenge, but the problems were consistent with other campus-community projects that did not have an established relationship. In this case, it was in the best interest of the students to allow them opportunities to volunteers at other sites that would foster interactions with storm survivors. The six students who remained at The Tornado Recovery Project, then, were able to participate in more hands-on experiences because there were fewer students to share the small quantity of work. These difficulties can arise if the timing of
the course does not coincide well with the time in the rebuilding process. However, despite initial problems, students expressed satisfaction with their service experiences.

**Empathy**

Despite initial problems finding hands-on service experiences, most students were eventually able to interact with the tornado survivors. By the end of the course, most of the students (N=eight) expressed empathy for individuals who experienced poverty. Students developed empathy by interacting with Holt residents who survived the storms. At The Tornado Recovery Project, James encountered Bill, an ice cream truck owner who lost his wife in the storm. James noted:

He was concerned about providing for his family. He said the storm took most of his trucks. He told me it would be a year before he could make any more money with that business. I did not ask him how he was going to make a living between now and then. I just let him speak freely… His attitude, however, was quite encouraging.

James also mentioned a woman who survived the storm that received assistance from the Tornado Recovery Project, and was now giving back to the non-profit. Additionally, JT discussed feeling “personally responsible” for helping a man whose house had been looted after the storm by individuals claiming to be relief workers. JT, a white male from an upper class upbringing, was a survivor of Hurricane Ivan. After the hurricane, relief workers had stolen family heirlooms from his home. JT recalled, “remembering watching my mother sob over something someone had taken from us in a vulnerable position, I referred the man…for further assistance.” Similarly, Shannon related when her parents sold her childhood house and her uneasiness and sadness about moving to the demolition of a tornado survivor’s generational house. She recollected:

I cried all night and did not want to hand the keys over the next morning. I know how hard it probably was for this man to finally give them permission to demolish this house.

Although her circumstances were clearly different from those of this tornado survivor, a common experience of loss was able to bond a middle-class college student to a working class tornado survivor. The experiences of JT and Shannon can be described as cathartic; they were able to experience healing from their past experiences of loss by helping others in their times of need.

The personal relationships that students built with tornado survivors who were struggling financially before the storm caused students to feel empathy for the survivors. These encounters allowed students to debunk attitudes about people who are poor. The commonly held belief that people in poverty are unmotivated individuals with deviant values was debunked through interactions with tornado survivors who were struggling financially. In fact, students related to the tornado survivors through common experiences of loss. Through these interactions, the students learned empathy, which also weakened negative stereotypes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Gender and Poverty Students’ Explanation of Poverty</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-Course</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Uneducated/no skills (8)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lazy/poor choices (4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Too many children (4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family history (3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Single parenthood</td>
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<td>Bad parenting</td>
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<td>Debt</td>
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| **Post-Course** | Individual (8) | Structural (10) |
| Uneducated/no skills (3) | Natural disasters (6) |
| Culture of poverty (3) | Poor health (3) |
| Lack of willpower | Job loss (3) |
| Single parenthood | Divorce (3) |
| | Death in the family (2) |
| | Racism |
| | Sexism |
| | Ageism |
| | System only benefits some people |
| | Poor schools |
| | Lack of insurance |
| | Welfare reform has failed |
| | Incarceration |
of people experiencing poverty.

Some students even dismissed their service supervisor’s opinions of the tornado survivors. Dana questioned the judgments made by one of her supervisor’s at the Tornado Recovery Project. The supervisor commented on a decision made by a tornado survivor to use cash assistance received from the Tornado Recovery Project to buy college football tickets. Dana stated, “I agree that it might be her way of coping with the tornado, and perhaps I can fall victim to the same mistake if I were in her shoes.” Gus seconded Dana’s views: “It’s easy to pass judgment on someone receiving public assistance that buys the same things as you do when you’re ‘working for your money’. In my opinion there’s a social stigma on people experiencing poverty.” Not only did students change their perspectives about poverty, but they also critically evaluated the judgments that relief providers passed concerning people experiencing poverty.

Views on Poverty

Table 1 depicts the changes from pre- to post-test for students’ explanations of poverty. Results reveal a general trend from individual level explanations of poverty to structural level explanations. Answers to the questions “Why are people poor? In other words, what causes poverty? List as many reasons as you can” on the pre-test yielded 10 structural explanations for poverty, and 21 individual-level explanations. JT, a senior, answered this pre-test question by stating, “when you stop giving people money, they will make their own.” James, also a senior, believed a proper goal should be to “help teach people to provide for themselves.” The language reflects a “blame the victim” or individual-level perspective on poverty. The assumption is that individuals who are poor are not motivated to improve their economic situations. Stacey, also a senior, posited that “poverty is a way of life for some individuals”, expressing a culture of poverty perspective. Initially, students believed that impoverished individuals have only themselves to blame for their circumstances.

However, after completing the 15-week course, student post-test responses reflected structural explanations of poverty (24 times) more than individual-level explanations (eight times). Only one of 14 students named more individual-level explanations of poverty than structural explanations after the course was completed. The students were now offering policy solutions to end poverty. For example, the opinions about government assistance for JT completely shifted after completing the service project, believing that the government should “continue food stamp policies in a way that allows users to eat at nutritional restaurants.” Additionally, James, who also worked at the Tornado Recovery Project, also expressed different views upon completion of the course, stating, “people need to be given the opportunity to get out of poverty.” Stacey, who completed her service with Habitat for Humanity, offered the suggestion to “educate leaders on the different levels of poverty and to understand the struggles they must go through.” These examples highlight how the transformative possibilities of a service learning course focused on social justice issues.

Discussion and Conclusion

Scholars have noted the strengths of disaster-based service-learning for the application of concepts learned inside the classroom. The service learning course discussed here was altered in response to the April 27, 2011 Tuscaloosa tornado, with the goal that students would be able to not only assist in recovery efforts, but also to learn about the meaning of poverty in the everyday lives of people who are on the brink of or currently experiencing financial disaster. Results from data collected during the Fall 2011 Gender and Poverty course, offered four months after the Tuscaloosa tornado, reveal that students had a generally positive experience with service despite an initial problem with lack of hands-on opportunities with the community partner. Students gained a deep understanding of the magnitude of the storm, and consequently, realized that many people in society are only one crisis away from a financial disaster.

The study has a few limitations. Although student journals indicate the feelings about performing service, it is not always clear if changes in students’ ideas about poverty have changed because of volunteer work or because of the class materials. The data cannot indicate which learning source had a larger impact on student learning. However, it is reasonable to conclude that student learning outcomes were achieved and attitudes about poverty were transformed as a result of both classroom and experiential learning. Additionally, the students enrolled in this course were sociology minors who may have learned about poverty in other courses, resulting in existing empathy for people who are poor. A final limitation is the small sample size of 14 students. The results of this
study cannot be generalized to predict outcomes of other service learning courses that respond to a major community disaster. However, the experience of this particular service learning course can be studied by others looking to create similar courses whose service components involve the provision of relief in the wake of natural disasters. Connecting with a service organization that has established community ties may be the most fulfilling partnership in these instances. A start-up service organization with particular goals and whose priorities change based on the community’s needs is helpful when rebuilding after a natural disaster, but partnerships with these newer groups may be difficult to coordinate because these organizations must be pliable to the community’s needs. In the aftermath of a natural disaster, the immediate needs of a battered community are certainly more important than the learning goals of a university class. Students who worked with service providers who were institutionalized in the community were never short on opportunities to assist and interact with tornado survivors.

Individuals who become ill, divorced, or are victims of natural disasters may be on the brink of immense financial difficulties. Acknowledging the structural explanations for poverty led to student empathy for tornado survivors. Additionally, student learning outcomes for understanding sociological perspectives about poverty were achieved. Structural explanations for poverty far outweighed individual-level explanations after students completed the course. The impoverished were more likely to be seen as “down on their luck” post-course, and government involvement was viewed as a necessary step towards the alleviation of poverty.

This research was a one-time, case study of sorts, bound by time and place. However, these extreme weather events appear to be increasing, and college educators at all levels should view these events not only as teaching moments relevant to their disciplines, but also as a means to establish connections in the communities at large. Evidence suggests that service experiences affect student perceptions of the storm’s consequences and about the individuals impacted by the tornado. Sociology scholars should continue to adjust their curricula when necessary to respond to significant events in their communities, whether caused naturally or by people, not just for the student learning opportunities, but also because of the civic responsibility that scholars have to their university communities.

References


About the Author

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Global Citizenship for the Non-Traditional Student

Stephanie Brown and Virginia Cope

Abstract

After taking students from The Ohio State University at Newark to Berlin and New Orleans, we recognized the many obstacles nontraditional students face in participating in such programs, and we sought innovative ways to overcome those difficulties and prepare participants for cross-cultural encounters. We developed an approach grounded in the concept of what we call cosmopolitan courtesy. Blending the notion of everyday “civility” with the philosophical and intellectual background of the concept of cosmopolitanism, we crafted a set of classroom exercises and discussion prompts that encourage students to articulate and practice strategies for coping with unfamiliar and potentially unsettling cross-cultural experiences. This preparation positions students to take full advantage of study abroad, service-learning, or domestic travel courses by inviting them to see themselves as global citizens.

Introduction

Learning experiences that take students outside the classroom—whether to work at a local nonprofit, travel domestically, or tour an international city—demand a greater emotional, logistical, and financial commitment. As English professors at The Ohio State University at Newark, we discovered in developing a study abroad course to Berlin and a service-learning course to New Orleans that we needed to be more systematic in ensuring that these opportunities were feasible for all our students—not just financially, but psychologically. Our student population includes significant numbers of nontraditional, low-income, minority, and first-generation students, some of whom are returning to college after serving in the military or having children or both, most of whom balance school with full or nearly full-time jobs. For example, about 35% of freshmen entering in August 2012 identified as first-generation (the percentage is likely much higher, because that information is not required on all versions of our college application). About 25% of students identified as non-Caucasian, and 28% were older than 21. This is precisely the population least well-represented in study abroad and service-learning, and our students have given us ample evidence of why (Salisbury, 2012; Green, 2001). For many, just getting a degree is a challenge—international education seems to them like something of a pipe dream, domestic study tours a luxury or a distraction, and even local service-learning a logistical hurdle. When one of us asked a high-achieving student—first-generation, returning to school at 31 and working full-time—about her interest in an upcoming Berlin course, for example, she immediately waved her hand dismissively and said, “That’s not for me.” When pressed, she cited work and family obligations, but also her sense that those kinds of programs were not for busy, older students who did not look like the smiling, carefree young adults pictured in glossy brochures.

We were committed to expanding the reach of these experiential courses, convinced that they hold the best hope of counteracting a 20-year decline in college students’ interest in the community, others’ well-being, the environment, or even in forming a philosophy of life (Astin, 2012). To reach our own students and fulfill our campus mission, we also sought to counter the homogeneity cited in both study abroad and service-learning student populations (Salisbury, 2012; Ender, 2000). Study abroad is credited with improving college retention rates and job prospects in a globalizing economy, as well as – more loftily – shaping better citizens of the community and of the world, with the experience and sophistication to smoothly cross cultures (Tallant, 2010). Service-learning students also gain in academic performance, values, self-efficacy, leadership, and other important areas (Astin, 2000). Yet study abroad students tend “to all look alike” while service-learning often attracts white, middle-class students, contributing to the impression that such courses are simply volunteerism for the wealthy and privileged (Salisbury, 2011; Green, 2001).

In developing and leading study abroad and service-learning classes involving travel, we provided generous subsidies, scheduled carefully, and promoted our programs attentively in order to attract students with limited resources or experience. For example, we limited trips to...
7–10 days because students had difficulty leaving behind work and family obligations for longer periods, and we controlled costs carefully, opting for no-frills accommodation choices, public transportation, and local tour guides arranged through friends, to keep program fees manageable. But we discovered other challenges after we had left the airport. Once in an unfamiliar culture—whether foreign or domestic—a significant number of students failed to embrace the very opportunity that they had paid dearly, and worked hard, to achieve. It became apparent that many students come to international education and even domestic travel with expectations that generally do not line up with the reality of the experience, and frequently they lack the resources to usefully process the difference. Accordingly, some students retreat emotionally or physically, or behave in ways that can only be described as rude—they laugh or made inappropriate comments; they refuse to speak or make eye contact with individuals or take refuge in an electronic device. Some reject an experience by invoking what we might call the “toddler exemption” – refusing to try something new simply because it is new. In one memorable moment in New Orleans, as an up-and-coming chef at a John Best restaurant explained the history and technique behind the cup of crab bisque being placed before them, several students recoiled and began fishing out the crab claw garnish, too involved to note the look of dismay on the chef’s face. In Berlin, students on a tour of a local mosque made audible, nervous comments about the desirability of “blowing up” the structure, while others complained that they considered such a tour “inappropriate,” given that they were not also touring a Christian church (apparently forgetting not just their manners but the fact that they had, in fact, toured a church on their first day in Berlin).

These reactions, we should note, came from smart and decent people, and from students who were relatively sophisticated and well-traveled as well as from those who were inexperienced. Because ours is a small campus, we knew these students well and had every reason to be confident in their abilities. They had written essays expressing their desire for travel, interviewed successfully with us, and often been star students in our on-campus classes. For these students, something clearly happened between formulating their desire to have intercultural experiences and the moment in which they were actually having them. They were not ready to go “off road”–and, most important, we had not prepared them to do so. We failed to anticipate that the primary reaction some students might feel upon encountering newness would be anxiety—and that they might cope with this feeling by retreating into boorishness. Instead of smoothly crossing intercultural boundaries, they fortified their isolationist positions.

To return to the example of the restaurant, we realized in hindsight that we had not prepared students appropriately for what was supposed to be one of the great treats of the week: samplings of classic New Orleans cuisine with a charismatic, native-born chef providing the history of dishes and an explanation of the restaurant’s take on them. What we had not considered was the discomfort such formality in a new city would create in the students, who had little experience in such settings, much less with such food. Unprepared, they regressed—preferring to exchange glances, raise eyebrows, and fish out crab claws to demonstrate their dismay to their peers. They bonded with each other rather than rising to the occasion with a sip of soup. Their disorientation led some into passivity (eating nothing) and others into rudeness (wrinkled noses).

Having assiduously addressed pragmatic travel issues, we now realized we needed to think more holistically about the obstacles to student learning in unfamiliar environments. The problem, we came to realize, was not one of manners; rather, the issue is that in the moment of confrontation with the unfamiliar, students suspend their understanding, often with less than optimal results. Accordingly, we developed an approach to better prepare students for cultural immersion. We developed a series of conversations and activities presenting the familiar notion of courtesy, extended to encompass its role in intercultural communication, not just as politeness but as a mode of learning.

Students, we theorized, were not revealing character flaws but responding predictably to what J. Mezirow describes as a disorienting dilemma (1997). For Mezirow, a disorienting dilemma is an opportunity for growth; it can lead to transformative learning if it causes a student to reassess his or her naturalized assumptions. However, for this to happen, the dilemma must permanently disrupt the “frame of reference” or “the structures of assumptions through which we understand our experiences...[that] selectively shape and delimit expectations, perceptions, cognition, and feelings” (p. 5). Such disruptions can be uncomfortable, even painful—and, if unprepared for, can lead students to behave
reflexively in unproductive ways that prevent them from doing more than cursorily acknowledging other cultures. In another incident on the same trip to New Orleans, students were given a private tour of a Ninth Ward art gallery by award-winning photographers who had remounted the work they had rescued from Hurricane Katrina—many images distorted by water damage, adding a new layer of significance to moving portraits of subjects including Angola prison inmates and Mardi Gras Indian chiefs. Students politely observed the works but when invited to ask questions of the artists, few spoke. Most were silent; many looked away from the images and their hosts. Meanwhile, several even retreated to their phones to send text messages. A post-visit discussion made it clear that few had gleaned much from the experience beyond the most basic information about the devastation wreaked on the Ninth Ward by Hurricane Katrina, which all agreed was “sad.” Their frames of reference clearly had not shifted.

We initially developed our programs in the hope that students, when confronted by unfamiliar experiences that threatened them with disorienting dilemmas, would spontaneously undergo Mezirow’s transformative learning experience—that having confronted their own limits, they would expand their frame of reference, change their expectations of themselves or others, and with some guidance from us, engage in “critical self-reflection, which results in the reformulation of a meaning perspective to allow a more inclusive, discriminating and integrative understanding of [their] experience” (Mezirow, 1990, xvi). We discovered, however, that without strong preparation, this would be impossible, especially given the fact that ours were exclusively short-term courses. It was not feasible for students in 10 days of travel, for example, to negotiate the six stages delineated by Milton Bennett (1986) in his Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. Nevertheless, we believed, as Aixa A. Ritz recently put it, “a short term, faculty-led study abroad program, as a course component, can be pedagogically designed to provide significant learning experiences [and] promote transformative learning” (2011).

After jointly leading a 2009 class to New Orleans, and anticipating again leading students to New Orleans (for service-learning) and to Berlin (for study abroad), we worked together on a framework to prepare students for intercultural interactions. To our Midwest students, New Orleans can seem as foreign as Berlin, and in this case we were preparing students to work closely with nonprofits that sought to preserve the city’s unique culture. It was imperative to prepare students well for interacting with people with different cultural expectations. Along with our typical preparatory efforts, we developed an approach grounded in the concept of what we decided to call “cosmopolitan courtesy.” Blending the notion of everyday “civility” with the philosophical and intellectual background of the concept of cosmopolitanism, we crafted a set of classroom exercises and discussion prompts that encourage students to articulate and practice strategies to cope with unfamiliar and potentially disturbing experiences in distant locales. The concept of cosmopolitan courtesy builds on recent work in philosophy and sociology concerning the pragmatic uses of theories of cosmopolitanism. These notions are based on Immanuel Kant’s notion of “universal hospitality,” broadly defined here as “the right of an alien not to be treated as an enemy” (Kant, 1795), but rather to be shown respect. Cosmopolitan courtesy encourages us to see every encounter with another as a “visit,” to use Kant’s term, and thus to treat others as “visitors,” even when (as in study abroad) students might reasonably consider themselves to be the ones visiting. Readings range from Kant to the work of philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah and sociologist Elijah Anderson; in-class discussions and activities allow students to process the ideas contained in the readings and to model “courteous” behaviors and reactions. Our objective is to smooth their transition from one culture to another by accustoming them to the idea of disruption and by giving them a cognitive framework to process and an arsenal of tools to deploy in the event of an anxiety-provoking situation. The result, we hope, is to empower students to view themselves not as mere observers of other cultures but as members in a global citizenry, motivated not by a desire to “study” or “help” others, but by a recognition that they are inextricably part of a global community, representatives of one or more “others” among many. This shift from being a “good student” or a “good Samaritan” to a “good citizen,” of course, informs much of the theorization of the concept of global citizenship, both in cosmopolitan and post-cosmopolitan contexts. (See Beck, 2000; Dobson, 2003; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004; and Noddings, 2005).

Our challenge was to translate the theory into a practice tailored to the specifics of our local situation. In preparing students for their travels (in both classes), we began with an exercise in
which students speculated on the etymologies of the words “cosmopolite” and “polite.” Upon being told that the word “cosmopolitan” derives from the Greek words cosmos and polites and means “citizen of the world,” students may well guess that the root of the English word “polite” is “citizen” and suggest an etymological connection, perhaps that city-dwellers need to have good manners to get along with one another. Even when they are informed that the root of polite is actually the Latin “polire,” meaning to polish and suggesting that polite individuals are those without rough edges, students may still make a valuable association between notions of courtesy and world citizenship. In a nonthreatening discussion, they begin as well to recognize the possibility of “rough edges” in their interactions and their need to polish themselves into a more sophisticated manner.

Cosmopolitanism also allows a framework for practicing teamwork and professionalism among the students themselves, before they encounter situations in another city or country. An emphasis on cosmopolitanism has obvious implications for cooperative efforts in all educational settings, since, as philosopher Appiah (2006) writes, two strands intertwine in the concept:

One is the idea that we have obligations to others, obligations that stretch beyond those to whom we are related by the ties of kith and kind, or even the more formal ties of a shared citizenship. The other is that we take seriously the value not just of human life but of particular human lives, which means taking an interest in the practices and beliefs that lend them significance. …There’s a sense in which cosmopolitanism is the name not of the solution but of the challenge (p. xv).

These two elements of the cosmopolitan consciousness come together in the notion of courtesy, making the two ideas a natural fit. It is simple enough to tell students that they should be interested in the practices and beliefs of others—a curriculum that foregrounds the importance of diversity, such as that at our university, makes this clear. Yet it is much more effective to demonstrate to students the power of cosmopolitan courtesy as a model for their interactions with others generally—whether other students in their classes, for example, whose backgrounds and identities may be very different from their own; with their instructors; with the authors of the texts they are reading; and even with knowledge itself. Declaring oneself “open” is fine as far as it goes; the next step is determining how to maintain one’s openness in the face of a difficult or unexpected situation.

After introducing the idea of cosmopolitan courtesy into the classroom, we ask students to suggest ways in which one indicates a willingness to show “hospitality” to another. Their suggestions generally preclude the behaviors described in the real-life examples we have given above and include positive actions that communicate a desire to bridge the gap between self and other, at least for the duration of the “visit.” Students may suggest, as indications of hospitality, that one “refuse nothing that is offered” (with exceptions, of course, for offers such as foods to which they are allergic). They may list physical manifestations of close attention, such as looking directly in the eyes of an interlocutor, or nodding. They may suggest that the best way to show interest in another person’s words is to ask a minimum of one question about whatever is said, even if the answer to the question seems obvious, since the purpose of the question in this context is as much to indicate attentiveness as to gather information. They may also, if they are preparing to go to a country in which English is not the native language, suggest learning and being strongly motivated to use (through points awarded for participation, for example) a minimum of three basic phrases useful in social situations, such as “please,” “thank you” and “you’re welcome.”

These steps seem obvious to most instructors, and indeed, once articulated, they often seem self-evident to students. Yet practicing the markers of cosmopolitan courtesy takes effort, as they discover when they begin to put their suggestions into action in the classroom in the pursuit of what may be designated, using sociologist Elijah Anderson’s term, “cosmopolitan canopies” or safe “pluralistic spaces where people engage one another in a spirit of civility, or even comity and goodwill” (p. xiv). Anderson’s work describes urban spaces in which “people of diverse backgrounds feel they have an equal right to be there” and in which “they can observe and be observed by others, modeling comity unwittingly” (279). In such spaces, everyone becomes a Kantian “alien” and a “hospitable” resident simultaneously. In a classroom setting, where students can agree to “model comity” as a group, future participants in study abroad can use the “low-intensity” dissonance they feel as they work to articulate their own differences to practice strategies for recognizing and making sense of the higher intensity dissonance they may feel when...
they leave the classroom and venture out into alien territory.

In the fall semester, for the Berlin study abroad as well as service-learning in New Orleans, students are asked in the classroom portion of the course that precedes the study tour to present themselves both as individuals and as students repeatedly to the other members of the class. Introductions preceding teamwork exercises, for example, can provide opportunities for students to describe themselves to their fellow classmates in ways that foreground differences among members of the group even as they build bonds among them as a team; students may, for example, be asked to explain “one obstacle to my participation in this program that I had to overcome” or “one fear that I have about this experience” or even “one reason I never thought I would study abroad.” Encouraging students to identify a set of behaviors that they can use to perform cosmopolitan courtesy (maintaining eye contact, asking follow-up questions, etc.) and then motivating them to use those behaviors allows them to show one another hospitality and forces them to really listen to one another. Such exercises can reassure students that their honest contributions will be met with honest attempts at comprehension, and can assist in bridging gaps between traditional and non-traditional students, who may entertain stereotypical views of one another. It also accustoms them to extending their attention as a matter of course, and not merely because they have been told that “there will be a quiz,” a skill that will attune them to their surroundings and, once they reach their destination, to potential opportunities for transformative learning. “Try to be one of the people on whom nothing is lost!” Henry James (1884) famously advised would-be writers; this maxim could also be usefully adopted by those preparing students for intercultural encounters.

Students also present research projects based on their own personal or professional interests to the rest of the class. The assumption is made that these presentations will be organized around information not already presented in the course, and that they may be only tangentially connected to the emphases of the course. Oral presentations are often unsuccessful (in all kinds of courses) because of the lack of a courteous connection between the presenter and the audience; students frequently feel that such presentations are aimed not at the class, but at the professor, and that they are merely bystanders with no obligation to do more than be physically present. The principles of cosmopolitan courtesy, however, can be used to elucidate the process by which the oral presentation can be a model for interaction with the unfamiliar, especially if students are encouraged to choose topics that are likely to be provocative in some way. In the Berlin course, students agreed that every presentation would be met with a minimum of two follow-up questions, both of which had to require that the speaker provide additional information rather than merely repeat something already said. Following this rule led to an atmosphere in which cosmopolitan courtesy was the norm—students gave presenters their full attention and devised questions about subjects of which they had previously had little or no knowledge.

This exercise proved its value once the group arrived in Berlin. On a city tour at the beginning of the program, the students saw a vocal group of protesters near the Brandenburg Gate (Figure 1) shouting what to them was the incomprehensible slogan “Free Water!” While one or two students responded inappropriately, making jokes about how they too felt like taking to the streets because German restaurants do not customarily offer diners free glasses of drinking water, one student approached a protester to ask for more information. He was rewarded with a detailed explanation of the group’s objections to the corporatization of natural resources. After thanking the group for the information and for their commitment to their cause, he returned to share what he had learned with the rest of his cohort. This led, over lunch, to his question about why he had never seen such a protest in the United States and a lengthy and spirited conversation, in which most of the group took part, about the obligations of governments, the rights of citizens, and the “proper” role of corporations.

Our approach had obvious value for short-term study abroad programs, but applying it to a longer term service-learning course carried additional challenges, since the students would be immersed in a culture that was both “familiar” (i.e., American) and largely alien (consisting of New Orleans subcultures and immigrant groups) and performing what many of them initially considered “charity” work. The 15 students would be working with three local organizations that sought to preserve the traditional culture and livelihoods of quintessentially New Orleans groups—therefore, ones that were by definition unfamiliar to our students. One was a nonprofit providing services to the fishing community, primarily comprised
of Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees; one representing the Mardi Gras Indian parading tradition; and a third, a folk museum that housed memorabilia from the Mardi Gras Indian culture, including the elaborate suits hand-sewn by the "chiefs."

When putting together this ambitious yearlong service-learning course, we gave much thought to how to prepare the students for this cultural encounter, eventually deciding to provide two trips, one at the end of each semester, to the city, with the on-campus time being used to prepare them intellectually and psychologically. In December 2012, after a semester of reading, discussion, and exercises, students spent four days in New Orleans learning the city and the work of the organizations with which they would be serving. In the spring semester, they began studying Web site development and film-editing to help them create Web sites and promotional videos for their organizations. In May 2013, they returned for another week of service.

In preparation in the fall semester, students were introduced to the organizations and the social issues in which they were embedded. They watched films and documentaries on New Orleans, the Tremé neighborhood relevant to two of the projects, Hurricane Katrina, and the fishing industry. They met with New Orleans native Lolis Elie and watched the films and TV shows to which he has contributed (HBO's "Treme" and the documentary "Faubourg Treme: The Untold Story of Black New Orleans"). They read articles on the city's geographical, political and cultural history, and they sampled red beans and rice. But we knew this was not enough to prepare students to set foot in the most unusual of American cities and encounter the combination of Southern hospitality, urban sophistication, and entirely unique cultural traditions (beignets, lagniappe, Mardi Gras, and more). To prepare them methodically for the culture shock and to create synergy among the members of the three teams, we also developed some exercises and workshops.

We shared with these students the familiar visual representation of culture as an iceberg of both observed and unobserved actions and beliefs and encouraged them to recognize that even so small a choice as a pair of socks reflected a cultural stake and a performance of identity. We asked them to reflect upon their own peculiar cultures—whether by neighborhood, family, class, gender, or ethnicity—and share with a small group any unique traditions that would not be understood by those outside the culture. We also then asked them to "consider an example of deep culture that has been a topic of debate between groups with differing ideologies – in the news or in your experience,” providing an example of a couple’s conflicting holiday traditions. They readily found examples from recent news stories and their own lives. These questions were meant to get the students in the analytical framework to explore cultural conflicts, moving from ones that were unthreatening to more divisive issues. Finally, after these reflection sessions, we asked the class, in groups of three, to take turns explaining a tradition or perception from their own experience that others in the group might be unfamiliar with; listening and responding to that explanation; or observing that interaction and reflecting on the rewards and challenges of the discussion. After lively discussions in small groups, several spoke of holiday traditions or described generational differences. A Vietnamese student who has spent most of her life in the United States charmed the class by bursting out with, “Well, my grandfather has seven wives and I can NEVER explain that very well to my friends!” She then proceeded to explain how she herself “made sense” of this tradition in visits to her grandfather and his wives.

In another session, we asked students, in groups of three, to brainstorm expressions of hospitality, spoken and unspoken, and then perform a short skit for the rest of the class, displaying hospitality and disrespect, however subtly. The rest of the class was asked to recognize and explain the various expressions displayed. This created some giggling as well as quite animated discussion about the necessity of maintaining eye contact and silencing phones. We also asked them some basic questions that they probably felt reluctant to ask (of the instructors) but certainly wanted answered: Why are we doing this project? What advantages does traveling to another city and working with these organizations offer us? What are your fears, concerns, anxieties, and objections? What do you think of what you have learned about New Orleans culture? Do you admire it, dislike it, fear it? Many admitted that they were quite fearful of appearing ignorant or rude to the Mardi Gras Indian chiefs or the head of the folk museum (the Backstreet Cultural Museum), and some expressed naïve hopes, such as that they would solve racism. Few at this point recognized the potential for their own emotional and intellectual growth in providing service to these organizations, as evidenced by the fact that many cited their mission as being one of
service ("to help them") rather than learning.

When we traveled with students to New Orleans in December, we were gratified to see the personal and intellectual growth they demonstrated. In four days of immersion in a city many found astounding and unnerving, not one student demonstrated the kind of discourteous or inattentive behavior we had seen in 2009, and all were deeply attentive to the cultural negotiations. In reflecting on their experiences in journals, students no longer presented themselves as privileged outsiders offering to help, but as visitors eager to learn and be a part of a community whose hospitality they much appreciated. One student who had been assigned to work with the nonprofit helping the Vietnamese fishing community admitted that he was initially little interested in the work with which we had been tasked (designing a Web site for the group). After touring Lower Plaquemines Parish with Sandy Nguyen, head of Coastal Communities Consulting, and listening to her impassioned stories, meeting Vietnamese and Cambodian fishing families in their homes, and watching workers at a local dock unload shrimp while Sandy Nguyen advised the owners on their status in the BP oil spill claim, he changed his mind. "Sandy said that when she had a Web site, she got lots of donations. Without a Web site, nothing. This place would fall apart without her. Listening to her compelled me to want to help. And that doesn't usually happen with me," he said. Another student in the same group said she had never considered the impact on the fishing community when prices went down. "Now I'm not happy when I see that the shrimp in the store is cheap," she said. In the spring, students in the group reviewed film footage, photos, and their notes to create a Coastal Communities Consulting site that will attract donors, inform the community of its services, and represent the compelling story of a community devastated by Hurricane Katrina and the BP oil spill, but fighting back.

One student participated in both the Berlin and New Orleans trips and wrote on the group Facebook page to thank her peers for their support and to reflect on the transformative experiences of her immersion in these two very different cultures. "When I was in Berlin, I learned about myself and in New Orleans, I reinforced what I learned and gained so much confidence," she wrote, referring both to her fellow students and the people she met in the city. "Over and over again I saw how kind and generous people can be and it was a really pleasant surprise. I've found myself just asking people I don't know random things to still attempt to have this connection."

Students who were assigned to conduct filmed interviews with the Mardi Gras Indian chiefs had a moment to demonstrate their cosmopolitan courtesy. The Mardi Gras Indians are groups of African-Americans from different neighborhoods in New Orleans who traditionally have designed and sewn elaborate parade costumes each year. They parade on Mardi Gras and other festival days in honor (the legend goes) of the Native Americans who helped Africans escape slavery. The Mardi Gras Indian Council had asked the students to build a Web site and interview the chiefs to document this rich and often misinterpreted history. After the group set up elaborate film equipment at the home of one of the chiefs, an elderly African-American man, a student of Indian descent nervously began the interview. A look of annoyance crossed the chief's face as the student spoke. Finally, the chief burst out with "I can't hear a word you're saying!" The problem may have been that the student was speaking too softly, but more likely was that the chief made an assumption that the student's Midwestern accent would be different. Rather than questioning the chief on his attitude, the student simply stepped aside and let another student take over the interview. The chief was himself not behaving with "cosmopolitan courtesy" but the student in that split second decided to set aside any embarrassment or offense he might have felt for the good of the group's project, which in this instance was capturing this chief's story on videotape for posterity. Back at the hotel that night, the students had an animated discussion about the awkwardness of the moment and the skill with which it was handled. The student of Indian descent admitted his initial confusion at the chief's response, but also the privilege he felt in listening to his rich story.

Several other students made comments suggesting that they had come far since their early journal entries, in which they imagined themselves as charity workers. A student who worked with Sylvester Francis, the creator of the Backstreet Cultural Museum, said simply, "I feel really privileged to work with Mr. Francis, and to hear his stories personally and in depth," as well as to help maintain his museum by cataloging the collection of Mardi Gras Indian suits and memorabilia. Another student working with the fishing community spoke of her pleasure in “seeing inside the lives and learning about what means so much to them,” while also admitting she almost
did not enroll in the course (despite an attached scholarship) because of her disappointment in high school service-learning projects. “This was real service-learning,” she said, unlike her previous experiences with tasks like gardening at a nursing home that involved little interaction with the population being served.

The most moving example of cross-cultural prowess came near the end of our time in the city and in response to a frightening event. On Mother’s Day, May 12, 2013, our last day in New Orleans, four students joined a second-line parade, a traditional New Orleans event in which a brass band (the “first line”) leads followers (the “second line”) in a parade through the neighborhood. While 12 students were booked on a flight back to Ohio that afternoon, two of the students who attended the parade planned to stay another week to conduct additional research on the parading tradition. Equipped with videocameras, the students joined in the parade on that sunny Mother’s Day, enjoying the lively music, the traditional dance, and the bright yellow outfits of the sponsors, the Big 7 Social Aid and Sponsor Club. Half an hour into the parade, gunshots rang out; the students, following closely behind the musicians, fell to the ground with the crowd, then ran for cover. Nineteen people were wounded, one seriously. (Within days two brothers would be charged with attempted murder for shooting into the crowd). The students, shaken but unharmed, contacted the program leaders and were taken back to the hotel. We offered counseling and, for the two who had plans to stay in New Orleans, immediate flights home. The students after some thought chose to stay and complete their work. Even more remarkably, a month later, when back in Ohio, they posted an announcement on Facebook: They were holding a yard sale to raise funds to help the most seriously wounded of the victims, Deborah “Big Red” Cotton. The two students, financially strapped themselves, gathered items ranging from DVDs to shoes for the sale, raising $300, every dime of which they sent to the Gofundme site, with “warm wishes for a quick recovery.” Clearly they saw themselves not as natives of a city or a state but of the nation and, potentially, the world.

Incorporating a thoughtful, philosophically grounded discussion of the ramifications of cosmopolitan courtesy into a study abroad or service-learning course can have wide-ranging effects. Non-traditional students may overcome significant obstacles to take part only to find that they feel distanced from fellow participants who hail from traditional student populations, and they face a greater challenge in processing the “disorienting dilemmas” that precede transformative learning. Understanding courteous interaction with unfamiliar people and experiences as not just “good manners” but as an ethical imperative and identifying and practicing a set of practical actions to “model comity” offer the student an active role in extending Kantian hospitality to those unlike himself or herself. Cosmopolitan courtesy, then, does not just show students the world: It makes them active citizens of it.

References


About the Authors

Stephanie Brown is an associate professor and coordinator in the Department of English and Virginia Cope is assistant dean and associate professor in the Department of English, both at The Ohio State University at Newark.

Figure 1. OSU Newark students in Berlin got many opportunities to practice “cosmopolitan courtesy,” a key concept in an OSU Newark study abroad course.
Learning Professional Journalism with Help from University Faculty and Students

Joshua Patton and Sean Smith

Introduction

The Oakdale Eagle newsletter started as an idea I had for my class in the summer enrichment program at Oakdale Elementary School. My objective was to get the students to write. One of the requirements of the summer enrichment programs was to bring in people who made writing a career. I invited Dr. George L. Daniels, a journalism professor at the University of Alabama, to speak to my class about newspaper writing. He has graciously continued to help and advise the reporters of the Oakdale Eagle news staff.

Latrina Spencer, 3rd grade teacher, Oakdale Elementary School, Tuscaloosa, Alabama

In July 2011, students of Oakdale Elementary in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, participated in a summer enrichment program. We learned a lot about writing and photography before we published The Eagle (Figure 1). But the writing wasn’t just regular writing; it was professional writing because we were writing a newsletter. Many of the students were excited to do the newsletter and many weren’t. They weren’t excited because they thought it was going to be boring. We focused on interviewing, our garden, and the final mission of the space shuttle Atlantis. Having someone from The University of Alabama was a great experience. Being in the summer program was lots of fun. Many of us were 6 or 7 years old and yet we still did a great job on the newsletter. We had help from Dr. Daniels, who is a professor at the University, as well as from Miss Spencer, our teacher. We also learned about photography and how to get just the perfect picture.

First Publication

In the middle of the 2011 summer, the co-authors, along with Daniia Wills, Jailah Brown, Tywaun Smith, and Dorian Pugh, got to see our very own articles in the newsletter, The Oakdale Eagle, at Oakdale Elementary School. We had stories about our principal, Dr. Lucile Prewitt, and the school secretary, Ms. Paulette Cobb, also, the outdoor classroom. One of the reporters, Daniia Wills, said “I felt excited and I felt like a professional reporter.” Also, Sean Smith said “being a reporter helped me improve my writing skills.” Lots of people had a hard time working on their article because it was their first time writing one. They got used to it when Miss Spencer, Dr. Daniels, and Ms. Kent helped them. A few weeks later the reporters got better and better. Almost everyone worked on the newsletter for Oakdale Elementary. Everyone had things for the newsletter and everything was on track for making this newsletter one of the best in Tuscaloosa City Schools. The reporters from our second grade class were great for the newsletter.

Annual Awards Luncheon

In April 2012, the co-authors, along with Daniia Wills, Gabreona Jones, Javon Hughes, DeQuavin Hutt, Ta’Miayah McKinstry, and Jailah Brown went to an awards ceremony at the Hotel Capstone on The University of Alabama campus. Ms. Kent, Miss Spencer, and Dr. Daniels were given awards there for the wonderful work on The Oakdale Eagle.

Before they handed out the awards, we got to eat salad, pie, and chicken. They started handing out awards. When The Oakdale Eagle was called up, we were excited. Daniia Wills said, “It felt wonderful being able to get that award.”

Presentation at UA

On October 2, 2012, the co-authors, along with Daniia Wills, Quedasia Herrod, Ms. Kent, and Dr. Daniels went to the Hotel Capstone on the campus of the University of Alabama for our presentation at the National Outreach Scholarship Conference (Figure 2). We used a PowerPoint slideshow to give a visual of what we were working on and how we worked. When we learned that we were going to be doing a presentation in front of a lot of adults, we felt very nervous. We practiced a lot and that helped. When the co-authors reflected on our experience, it made us feel proud to represent our school and The Oakdale Eagle. We did so good that we were mentioned in Dr. Daniels’ newsletter at The University of Alabama. It also
was mentioned on our school’s website. There were pictures of the co-authors making the presentation that was recorded on camera.

**About the Authors**

Joshua Patton and Sean Smith are third graders at Oakdale Elementary School in Tuscaloosa, Ala.

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**Figure 1.** Staff members proudly display copies of *The Oakdale Eagle*.

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**Figure 2.** Third graders Joshua Patton and Sean Smith, perhaps the youngest presenters ever at an international scholarly conference, are shown here during their NOSC presentation on October 2, 2012.
A Five-Step Model for “Unconventional Engagement”

George L. Daniels

Abstract

Why subject third graders to the scrutiny of scholars at an academic conference? As one example of “unconventional engagement,” The Oakdale Eagle, a newsletter established in 2011 as a result of a partnership initiated by a local elementary school, demonstrates the value of higher education responding to a call from the community. Not associated with a service-learning class or academic research but involving college students and faculty from The University of Alabama and Stillman College, this partnership exemplified the power of volunteerism and community service. The highlight occurred when third graders, who were among the first to write stories for The Oakdale Eagle, made a presentation at the 2012 National Outreach Scholarship Conference in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. In addition to contrasting conventional and unconventional community engagement, this article charts the five steps in a unique community-initiated partnership.

Introduction

A report by the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (2012) found over 70% of all college students participate in some form of volunteering, community service, or service-learning. This widely circulated report included a national call to make civic and democratic learning an expected outcome for all college students and integral to their education. In essence, the authors proposed that community engagement should extend throughout one’s educational career, placing students, not educators, at the center of community engagement and requiring new players, new platforms, new methods, and potentially new outcomes. Grounded in the literature on community engagement, this manuscript describes a five-step process for “unconventional engagement.” It tells the story behind third graders creating a publication and delivering a presentation at the 2012 National Outreach Scholarship Conference (NOSC) on the same program with college presidents, tenured professors, and a U.S. ambassador. These third graders exemplify the new players and the newsletter they produced the new platform and methods of engagement, setting the stage for new outcomes.

Notions of Engagement

Some maintain that engagement essentially means people genuinely listening to each other across boundaries for the purpose of solving complex societal problems. This definition comes from the community of land-grant institutions operating with an extension mission where “public dollars for public good” is a basic tenet (Bull, Anderson, Payne, & Foster, 2004).

For engagement to be authentic, it must reflect collaborative work; require active involvement in communities; value diversity of people, expertise, and culture; utilize authentic processes for learning; and embed itself in democracy and collaborative leadership (Collins, 2011). Some argue that engagement should be transformative in nature, in the manner of public health (Brown et al., 2006; Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker, 1998). Transformative engagement is not only a transfer of expertise from university to community and community to university, but is also a process in which all partners apply critical thinking to complex community problems (Brown et al., 2006). This process occurs in a series of iterations that can begin with a request from the community for assistance with a specific problem or need. Early success in solving the problem or meeting the specific need, coupled with the learning that occurs in the process, leads partners to understand that they need more information, which leads to deeper engagement (Brown et al., 2006).

Community-based research in public health is a collaborative approach that equitably involves community members, organizational representatives, and researchers in all aspects of the research process (Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker, 1998). At Michigan State University, this notion of transformation is reinforced in its definition of university outreach by acknowledging the larger society’s rapid and fundamental transformation,
which requires higher education’s active and creative involvement (Provost’s Committee, 1993). The report operationalized at Michigan State, originally released two decades ago, listed three common foundations of engagement: Engagement is reciprocal; the missions of research, teaching, and service are fully integrated; and all engagement is scholarly—both in terms of acts and products.

One of the most-cited concepts is Boyer’s (1996) multiple forms of the scholarship of engagement—discovery, learning, engagement, and integration. His last published article, written before his death in 1995, was written for the first edition of what is now the Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement. Boyer challenged colleges and universities to become more engaged with the most pressing social, civic, and ethical problems in communities, and with public education in particular.

Barker (2004) attempted to define the scholarship of engagement using a taxonomy of five emerging practices, suggesting a problem-driven, pluralistic approach. He developed his taxonomy after a review of the literature, as well as reviews of websites, publications by civic engagement centers at higher education institutions, and interviews with practitioners. Those five practices were public scholarship, participatory research, community partnership, public information networks, and civil literacy scholarship.

According to Sandmann (2006), scholarship should be the foundation on which community-based engagement is conceptualized, implemented, assessed, and communicated. In the purest sense of the word, “scholarship” is what is being done, while “engaged scholarship” is how it is being done, and, for the common or public good, what end it is done. Engaged scholarship differs from traditional scholarship in purpose, the questions driving it, and in the design, analysis, and dissemination of results.

Defining Unconventional Engagement

UA students working on The Oakdale Eagle project were earning no class credit; thus, the project falls outside of service-learning. In fact, that is one way the partnership described in this report adds something new to the literature. Since it’s not another service-learning class and the partnership was not initiated by a university faculty member looking for an innovative teaching tool, there was no research agenda identified prior to the partnership being established. To date, no data have been collected at the site of the partnership. If there is just an opportunity for engagement based on the genuine listening to people and no assessment or evaluation in advance, does that mean no engagement took place? What if the emphasis were on the impact on the volunteering journeys of the players and the benefits to the community organization (Gray, 2011)? That it is where the focus of this case study lies.

While Sandmann (2006) suggested that scholarship should be the foundation for framing community engagement, this study offers an unconventional approach that places the scholarship, the contributions to the body of knowledge, as secondary to the relationships that were initiated strictly for the purposes outlined by the community partner and the benefits of the engagement assistance they receive. The contrasts between unconventional and conventional engagement are depicted in Table 1. These contrasts are positioned along five dimensions: the initiator of the engaged partnership, the director of the engaged partnership, the role of scholarship, the role of university teaching, and the link to the service mission of the university or representative of the academy. Next, we examine each of the five dimensions of the differences between conventional and unconventional engagement.

1. Partnership Initiation. In likening campus-community partnerships to interpersonal relationships, Bringle and Hatcher (2002) explain that initiation can be planned or serendipitous. A request from a community agency seeking volunteers can potentially result in an enduring partnership. Two parties with common interests can be attending the same meeting and coincidentally end up in a partnership. When it comes to who initiates the partnership or the engagement, in unconventional engagement the community partner is the initiator. This means no pre-conceived objectives of the academy will drive the direction of the relationship. Instead, the initiator is the driver of the relationship, which takes us to the second dimension of this model.

2. Partnership Direction. Scholars are often guilty of “subjugating our community partners as passive recipients in community-based engagement....” (Bortolin, 2011, p. 56). It is hard to imagine an engagement experience where the tables are turned and the timeline, needs, and, ultimately, the direction of the
partnership is almost entirely a product of the community partner’s needs and interests. Here, unconventional engagement would mandate that the community partner be at least equal since the partner is the director of the partnership. As in an interpersonal relationship, a partnership structured this way will benefit from constant monitoring and an advisory group that could guard against inappropriate dependency or power differences and extensive interdependency.

3. Scholarship Role. As Sandmann (2006) suggested, in engaged scholarship there is a tendency to steer away from a model of isolation and toward one where the community partners are consumers before “the work” even starts. What if the work isn’t producing scholarship at all, or if it is, only as a secondary goal? If the community partner is both the initiator and the director of the partnership, “the work” is primarily the service. Instead of having a scholar at the head of the table, that role is filled by a community member and the project goals set accordingly.

4. University Teaching Role. An engaged student is an active citizen, who, at a university, might be involved in community-based projects. But as Ward and Moore (2010) explain, the term “engagement” encompasses activities students participate in not only to foster community engagement but are also used to describe a state of being. Furco (1996) explained that there are five types of experiential education activities through which students can participate in the community. Community service-learning is just one of them. A credit-bearing experience tied to learning goals or objectives would reflect conventional engagement. Here, we define unconventional engagement as experiential education that is not necessarily part of a class or credit-bearing experience.

5. Service Mission Link. The one dimension where there is little difference between conventional and unconventional approaches to engagement is the service mission link. Outreach can be considered academy-centered with the scholars reaching out to those who benefit (Fear, Rosaen, Foster-Fishman, & Bawden, 2001). Outreach can be reciprocal with partners, engaging in ways to reflect mutual interaction and input (Brown, Reed, Bates, Knaggs, Casey, & Barnes, 2006). The synonymous nature of outreach and engagement was exemplified by a Penn State official who characterized outreach scholarship at his school as extending university resources through local engagements (Ryan, 2001).

With an understanding of the differences between conventional and unconventional engagement, the next step is to further explicate the unconventional engagement project under study. The steps in our unconventional engagement project are depicted in Table 2. They trace the partnership among Oakdale Elementary School, Stillman College, a private historically black college in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and The University of Alabama, a research institution, that led to a presentation at NOSC 2012 by Oakdale Elementary School students.

### Elements of Engagement in an Elementary School Newsletter Project

This unconventional engagement story did not end with the conference presentation, however. In fact, after the conference, the students would go on not only to write about that experience in the next issue of The Oakdale Eagle, but also position the publication as a vehicle for direct reporting on engagement activities at their school. The issue published immediately following NOSC included an account written by one of the student presenters:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conventional</th>
<th>Unconventional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partnership initiated by academy</td>
<td>Partnership initiated by community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project directed by scholar</td>
<td>Project directed by community partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary purpose is research</td>
<td>Research is secondary purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching model is service-learning</td>
<td>Teaching model is volunteerism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service mission is reciprocal</td>
<td>Service mission is reciprocal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 1: Community Connection (invitation issued)
The Oakdale Eagle story starts with a talk between a second grade teacher and a university professor who had visited Oakdale Elementary as a volunteer. The teacher suggested journalism as enrichment in a four-week elementary school summer curriculum in 2011. The professor made presentations to support journalistic assignments—news stories and photos that could be published in a newsletter. Quickly, rising third graders were conducting interviews—journalism’s principal method of acquiring new terms, writing and rewriting stories, shooting with a digital camera, and typing and editing stories on a computer using Microsoft Word. The teacher and professor imposed a newsletter design for publication. As the program ended, the first issue was distributed around the school. A second teacher came on board in the fall. Three more editions were produced as the successful partnership was recognized by the local university.

Step 2: A Community Partnership Award and Initial Field Trip to the University
In spring 2012, the teachers who initiated the partnership and their students won a University of Alabama award for Community-Partner Initiated Engagement Effort, receiving “seed money” to sustain the project for four more issues. True to their training, the young staff recorded the impact of attending the awards program in The Eagle. An Eagle staffer interviewed a university vice president in charge of the awards program, resulting in the following words: “In April, several students who had helped with The Oakdale Eagle (received) an award. …I had a wonderful experience…. I imagined that I had completed elementary school and had started college. It was as though I attended the fall. Three more editions were produced as the successful partnership was recognized by the local university.

Step 3: Partnership Expansion to Include New Players and Partners
With 45 students learning journalism after-school, pressure for support increased. The university professor reached out to university students and a colleague at Stillman College, a local historically black four-year liberal arts college with a journalism sequence. Stillman students accompanied the professor helped expand the after-school program. In fact, both professors recruited college students for the after-school journalism program. Designed to promote professional development, students organizations proved ideal for community service. Volunteership is typically expected of these groups. The UA Society of Professional Journalist chapter got involved, taking on the Oakdale students as a community partner in support of the publication. Weekly one-hour sessions were supplemented by two special writing activities tied to holidays. Over the course of the program, Oakdale students produced 96% of the stories. Only two articles—a principal’s column and an announcement regarding events—were outside the students’ control. A four-page “New Faces” issue featuring new teachers and faculty was published in September 2012. An eight-page was published in November 2012 and two more issues that fall. The editors of The Oakdale Eagle and adding from their stock of photos. The professor helped them prepare an outline. Their teachers followed up as they prepared the text. Numerous rehearsals were held to become comfortable before a large audience.

Step 4: Scholarship Developed
As students’ prepared for their second visit to the University campus, the site of the conference, teachers had the ordeal of deciding who would present papers from their group. After much deliberation, there were 45 students participating in the after-school journalism program. Was it fair that both presenters were from the third grade class and there were students at both the fourth and fifth grade level not involved? The decision was made to allow only two or three students to attend and they would come from the fourth and fifth grade level. The other two students would be responsible for serving as ushers at the NOSC session distributing copies of The Oakdale Eagle for those in attendance. There were two presentations on community partnerships scheduled at the same NOSC time slot, the Oakdale students and one by Ph.D. students who had run another after-school program. The doctoral students quickly decided they did not want to follow the kids, who they assumed would “steal the show.” The students presented The Oakdale Eagle story in flawless fashion. Afterwards, the spotlight turned on their teachers, who answered questions about research, ways to measure the effectiveness of the program, and motivating students. The school system’s media relations director was on-hand for this big day. The two non-presenting students took turns using the digital SLR camera. Four students served as reporters for a future issue of The Oakdale Eagle. In a matter of 90 minutes, these third graders had made the single biggest presentation of their lives and were no doubt the youngest presenter in NOSC history. They had accomplished something many college students never do: presenting at a national academic conference. As is customary after scholarly conferences, the university faculty member proceeded to prepare a report for possible publication in an academic journal. What is not so customary, these third graders were also invited by the editors of JCES to submit a write-up. The faculty member met twice with the students to help them outline what they wanted to say in their article and to divide up who would write what. Once the article was submitted and returned from the editor with questions and revisions for a “revise and resubmit,” the faculty member met again with the two third graders. During this session, the students were introduced to the “Track Changes” feature in Microsoft Word, one their teachers/advisers for The Oakdale Eagle had used in class. Familiar with the software and third graders quickly, the third graders proved to use the feature as they went through the questions and suggested edits from the JCES editor. The students completed revisions and resubmitted their manuscript.

Step 5: Sustainability Questions
When asked an “unconventional” partnership end? Such a partnership would seem to be sustainable without continued heavy input from the university partner. As the second academic year of The Oakdale Eagle project approached, it was determined that there were plans for additional issues of the newsletter. Funds from another grant were re-allocated to continue the newsletter at least for a “revise and resubmit,” the faculty member met again with the two third graders. During this session, the students were introduced to the “Track Changes” feature in Microsoft Word, one their teachers/advisers for The Oakdale Eagle had used in class. Familiar with the software and third graders quickly, the third graders proved to use the feature as they went through the questions and suggested edits from the JCES editor. The students completed revisions and resubmitted their manuscript.

On Oct. 2, 2012, four students from Oakdale Elementary went to Hotel Capstone…. We talked about starting the newsletter and we explained how we interviewed teachers at the school. The audience smiled and seemed to enjoy the presentation.

—Joshua Patton, Staff Reporter, Third Grade

The newsletter was still active in 2013, as the eighth issue went to press early in the year. It included stories about students participating in a mock presidential election. President Barack Obama was the overwhelming favorite as students as young as Pre-K cast ballots on the same day as the rest of the nation. At the same
time, following a pre-election day assembly where each of the student candidates spoke, students voted for members of their student council. The student council was featured on the front page of the newsletter providing plantings for those they visited during the Christmas season. Another article was about a member of the Tuscaloosa City Council visiting the school as the keynote speaker.

Discussion
Our case study of community partnering adds to the understanding of what scholars consider “authentic” engagement (Collins, 2011) by demonstrating that collaboration between a major university, an HBCU, and an elementary school, though unconventional, is also authentic. Furthermore, unconventional engagement as described here reflects the transformative engagement process based not only on transfer of expertise from the university to community, but an interactive process in which all partners apply critical thinking skills to complex community problems (Brown et al., 2006). This particular unconventional engagement case study, meets head-on Boyer’s (1996) challenge to higher education to become more actively engaged with the nation’s schools, with community partners—some in only the third grade—engaging in multiple forms of engaged learning.

In less than two years, a local elementary school teacher’s invitation for a state university to join a partnership placed her students on the international stage, fulfilling the potential outlined by Jay’s (2010) suggestion that community research projects can be “glocal,” a condition wherein forces, ideas, and trends global in origin are played out locally. This prospect is but one of many growing out of the The Oakdale Eagle project. If nothing else, it raised the students’ future horizons, challenging them not to be limited by their immediate surroundings within a 96% African-American student population with 90 percent of students on free or reduced student lunch in a school that had not achieved its Adequate Yearly Progress goal in standardized tests. Despite their educational environment, this project proved to them they could compete on the larger stage. As for the University, the benefits included a positive press about its Oakdale partnership, useful field experience for students and faculty, and the realization that positive outcomes can sometimes occur serendipitiously. The Oakdale Eagle case study presented an opportunity to articulate a model of unconventional engagement whereby the community-campus partnership was notable for being primarily a community initiative. At the same time, the importance of funds and expertise from the university cannot be overlooked. While no formal assessment of the effects of the partnership on the students (elementary or college) has been conducted, the major goal, publication of the student newsletter, continued into its third year. The involvement of third graders as active presenters at a national conference is arguably one of the major outcomes of the project, perhaps the best example of how those of us in the academy can be authentic in our engagement efforts, even one as “unconventional” as this. The ultimate impact of this account of engagement will be if other academic institutions will open themselves up to such targets of opportunity.

Lessons Learned
This unconventional engagement case study challenges all engagement scholar players not only to think outside the box, but also to prepare themselves for the unthinkable: Elementary school students making a presentation at an international conference of scholars! Thus those who are forming partnerships in unconventional engagement are encouraged to leave all options on the table; engagement opportunities are not limited to the usual suspects. Institutions of higher learning should remain open and inviting to partnerships originating in the community, even if at first there may seem to be little benefit to the university. The Oakdale Eagle experience proves that unconventional engagement can be worth pursuing.

References


**About the Author**

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Introduction

Embedded within the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics is a proactive challenge to promote social and economic justice focused on vulnerable and oppressed groups. The language of this code specifies that socially just social work services insure equal access, equality of opportunities and equal participation in decisions (http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp, retrieved January 22, 2011). Many social workers become acquainted early on with Rawls’ (1971) writings that highlight social justice as an underlying ideal for societal decisions regarding the distribution of resources in fair and equitable ways, including both the principles of liberty and difference. Specifically, it is Rawls’ principle of difference around which many progressive models of distributive social justice emerge and impact participatory research: unavoidable inequities in social and economic resources should be arranged so that they are of greatest benefit to the most disadvantaged groups; offices and positions must be egalitarian, open to everyone to allow a fair equality of opportunity (Rawls, 1971). Applying Rawls’ principles to our work in creating and sustaining partnerships requires an ongoing assessment of the available resources and a thorough understanding of the means and processes through which these resources are shared, and the processes through which these resources are shared, negotiated, and renegotiated through the life of the partnership. Galambos (2008) outlines the ways in which these philosophical principles of social justice may be advanced within social work education, including the domains of libertarian, communitarian, distributive, utilitarian justice, and egalitarian justice. In her argument, it is not one principle or form of social justice that guides the social work profession, but rather the need for educated discourse regarding the ways in which these philosophical principles may be differentially embraced in order to maximize social justice opportunities within social work education, practice, and research.

The active promotion of social and economic justice underlies engagement in activities such as community-based participatory research (CBPR). Often, these partnerships intentionally engage historically disenfranchised communities and the agencies that provide services and advocacy for underserved groups. Likewise, a growing literature base has emerged, emphasizing the interconnections among education, practice, and social justice promotion within the field of social work (Nadel, Majewski, & Cosetti, 2007; Soska & Johnson Butterfield, 2004). However, even amid the opportunities presented by university-community partnerships and interdisciplinary CBPR initiatives, diverse stakeholder groups may differ in their expectations, capacities, challenges, as well as institutional and situational power differentials that emerge in real-world engagement.

The foundation of community-based research, as well as service-learning, is the university-community partnership. The purpose of this article is to utilize the voices of several key stakeholder groups among differing organizational structures to discuss the ways in which key tenets of the social work profession, including social justice, will enhance the partnership process. Through exemplars and partnership process guidelines, we intend to expand the multi-stakeholder dialogues
that can promote more equitable and sustainable community-university partnerships.

The literature around university-community partnerships has experienced a boom in recent years. Several authors have discussed and illustrated this growing trend, including Butin, 2005; Maurrasse, 2001; Nadel, Majewski, and Sullivan-Cosetti; and Soska and Johnson Butterfield, 2004. Amid case studies and model partnership programs written by a predominantly academic audience, there is a need for a wider lens on how these partnerships are perceived by multiple stakeholder groups. The unique contribution of this article is the coming together of multiple stakeholders with the specific intention to reflect on our respective past partnership experiences in light of the philosophical underpinnings of social work and social justice. It is noteworthy that we each bring separate experiences to this discussion, as our past and current partnerships are not with each other. Building on our joint reflections, the authors of this manuscript have engaged in an iterative collaboration via multiple dialogues and discussions to produce Partnership Process Guidelines. The guidelines serve to offer practical recommendations which infuse these philosophical foundations into areas of communication essential to the creation and maintenance of thriving university-community partnerships, the foundation for community-based participatory research that are relevant from a multi-disciplinary perspective.

CBPR Partnerships as a Mechanism for Social Justice

Community based participatory research may be viewed as an important mechanism accentuating social work’s professional commitment to social justice and creating opportunities for active engagement with traditionally under-represented communities to address a social problem or concern. The appeal of creating thriving university-community partnerships is the anticipated mutual benefit to faculty, students, and community agencies through service-learning, infrastructure and capacity building, translating practice to research, and likewise real-world practice-informing research choices (Fogel, 2006; Nadel et al., 2007; Rogge & Rocha, 2005). However, a comprehensive understanding of the process of partnership development, especially from multiple stakeholder perspectives, has been less frequently described in the literature (Primavera, 2004; Sandy & Holland, 2006). Gelmon, Holland, Seifer, Shinnamon, and Connors (1998) assert that their study on mutuality in partnerships is one of few examinations of the community experience, and that future work around the processes associated with university-community partnerships ought to be formulated in such a way that captures these voices. In their study on service-learning partnerships, Sandy and Holland (2006) conclude that community partners desire a relationship that is more reciprocal in nature and recognizes the community stakeholder group’s distinctive, but sometimes overlooked, contributions. Extending from Rawls’ social justice principles, key stakeholder groups within university-community partnerships have both a right to the same basic liberties of participation in creating and sustaining the partnership, as well as the opportunity to proactively address existing inequalities of decision-making power or resources brought to the table at all phases of the collaborative process.

Two specific models of university-community partnerships underscore our multi-stakeholder discussion and guidelines. Bringle and Hatcher (2002) focus on the relational aspects of partnership development within the context of interpersonal theory and its practice implications. In this model, there is thoughtful consideration regarding the nuances of communication, ongoing assessment of mutuality in both the process and outcomes of the relationship, as well as the realization that in a working partnership, there will be both interdependency between the partners and, hopefully, a transformation from individual to partner-developed goals, expectations, and outcomes (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). This relational perspective compliments the interdisciplinary collaboration model described in a case study by Amey and Brown (2005) that reinforces the processes and stages of ongoing collaboration as essential to nurturing a thriving university-community partnership over time. In this model, the partnership is conceptualized as moving from a “top down” expert model to a co-existing parallel and facilitative model and finally transforming into an integrative, collaborative process model.

Partnership Process Guideline Methodology

The Partnership Process Guidelines (Table 1) were developed with the objective of viewing university-community partnerships through multiple stakeholder perspectives, each of whom brings a different set of needs, resources, challenges, and expectations as well as variable levels of power. Egalitarian voicing of perspectives
These guidelines are drawn from both scholarly literature and interpersonal models of partnership development (i.e., Amey & Brown, 2005; Bringle & Hatcher, 2002) and the lived experiences of faculty, community organization, student, and academic administration professionals. The guidelines offer a way to focus on the process of partnership formation and maintenance between the university and the community as a way to promote thriving partnerships and minimize hurdles “down the road” when engaging in activities such as community-based research and service-learning. Ultimately, we assert that maintaining a thriving community-university partnership is an investment of time and resources among all stakeholders centering around several key aspects of communication:

**Communicating Around Mission**
- Establish mutual mission recognition as a priority in relationship development.
- Share a written mission statement and open conversation around varied personal, professional, and organizational missions.
- Recognize and be open about conflicts that arise when personal mission and the partnership’s ultimate goals conflict with the role of “organizational ambassadors.”
- Find common words and themes within respective mission statements that constitute a common language for the partnership.
- Form and build a relationship that is focused on supporting each other’s missions and identifying a common goal from the partnership.
- Recognize and respect the differences in missions and discuss ways that these differences may be complementary and/or conflicted.

**Communicating Around Research Ethics and Participant Perspectives**
- Acknowledge the agency’s central commitment to protect its clients and staff.
- Integrate trainings for agency staff around research ethics and additional human subjects protections as a part of both pre-research activities and on an ongoing basis throughout the partnership.
- Know the perspective and mandates of the Institutional Review Board(s) governing research protection that may differ from the agency’s usual practices.
- Discuss perceived power differentials openly. This includes decision-making processes & ultimate authority, intellectual property, and equal distribution of human and fiscal resources.
- Converse openly about perceived differences and similarities in race, ethnicity, age, social class and sexual orientation between the University, community agency staff, and consumers with regard for promoting social justice.
- Advocate for institutional and organizational responsiveness to addressing human subject protection and research integrity.
- Involve all partners in responding to concerns of the Institutional Review Board and advocating for solutions that maximize protections for all participants.
- Discuss ownership of data and other ultimate products of the collaboration.

**Communicating Around Roles and Resources**
- Ask the “big three” questions: What does each partner bring? What does each partner want? What does each partner need?
- Take stock of what is still needed to accomplish the intended goal of the partnership. Focus on how to go about getting that together and identify who will take on what roles.
- Focus on the people at the table, as well as the organizations represented by these individuals.
- Recognize that a lasting university-community partnership will be about an established relationship between organizations, not just individuals.

**Communicating Around Timelines and Priorities**
- Identify the timelines of all stakeholders (faculty, community need/demand, organizational mandates, staff needs, student needs, funding agency needs).
- Allow all stakeholders in the partnership to discuss their expectations about each other’s roles in achieving timelines and establishing priorities.
- Articulate desirable, as well as acceptable, time-frame parameters.
- Be aware of, and communicate, time-line trends (i.e. how long an IRB application takes to process, the turn-around time for funding agencies).
- Keep timelines and priorities as an ongoing conversation, but one grounded in the other areas of mission, ethics, and roles/resources.

**Building University-Community Partnership Into Social Work Education**
- Affirm the mutual benefit to all partners in nurturing the next generation of high quality social work practitioners, researchers, administrators, and scholars.
- Establish a regular faculty presence in organizations where students undertake research or service-learning activities to build relationship continuity; the student, the advisor, and the agency should all be at the table together from the beginning.
- Offer research methods course content that discusses the process of establishing and maintaining university-community partnerships and practice-based research as a component of social work research methods, including critical discourse around the strengths and limitation of this approach.
- Initiate practice class discussions about being a practitioner in a research environment, and engaging in research that enhances one’s practice.
- Involve undergraduate and graduate field students in university-community partnership discussions and ask for student input regarding ways to enhance existing relationships.
- Facilitate dialogue with doctoral students involved with community-based research to proactively discuss potential role conflicts and their own process of building a thriving community-university partnership that will extend beyond their doctoral program.
- Ensure that faculty carefully consider where students “are at” in terms of learning needs in order to inform their own pedagogical approach.

during the process of guideline development was approached through a social justice lens.

The authors of the guidelines include a community agency staff member overseeing research and evaluation within her agency, a tenure-track faculty member engaged in a CPBR partnership during her early career, a doctoral student engaged in community-based research assistants, a doctoral student focused on the substantive inquiry area of university-community partnership, and an associate dean for community engagement within a School of Social Work. This iterative process took place via in-person meetings, telephone conferences, and email exchanges over several months. While we had a goal to produce a defined product, we also openly acknowledged
transformative growth in our individual and collective approaches to partnerships designed to foster CBPR projects through the process of these open dialogues.

We began the process by reviewing the literature, previously summarized, which was compared and contrasted with our own individual experiences. We then engaged in an open dialogue about the specific differences in our expectations and experiences that emerged. Ultimately, we drafted, refined, and finalized a document based on specific communication themes which cut across our varied experiences. The guidelines reflect process, relational, and social justice promotion steps in creating and sustaining a thriving partnership. Similarly, each stakeholder group voices an individual perspective in this article which augments the collaborative Partnership Process Guidelines we developed.

Community Organizational Perspectives

For a community-based organization providing direct services, collaboration with the academic institution has many potential benefits. The opportunity to partner with faculty can offer intellectual stimulation and build research infrastructure by providing critical guidance for data analysis, offering expertise on program evaluation, enhancing the ability to obtain funding, and supporting the training of staff in relevant areas. Student projects can provide extra staff to a grassroots agency and can serve as a natural channel for the partnership itself (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Foreman Kready, 2011).

Many community organizations consider the training of students an important aspect of their overall mission statement, ensuring that future practitioners have had some relevant, real-world experience. These students may also serve as a potential applicant pool for the agency.

In establishing these relationships, the principles of CBPR (Israel et al., 2003) are useful to consider. These now well-regarded principles contain language that reflects the philosophical foundations of distributive and egalitarian justice described by Rawls (1971). Most notably, the guidelines stress that participation as equal partners where the needs of the agency and the academy are mutually balanced is a necessary foundation on which to build a thriving (and socially just) partnership. For example, many agency staff are intimidated by the thought of research and may have a very different—and mistaken—perception of what will be required in the conduct of research. They may also be overburdened with the provision of direct services and may not respond enthusiastically to additional obligations. Reaching a mutual solution such as identifying a staff member who can serve as a “research navigator” may bring the two systems together and translate the language of research to direct service staff and share the concerns of front line staff. While a seemingly simple concept, successful communication between the two systems can determine—or undermine—the success of the entire partnership.

Respect for differing organizational cultures is another important component of successful collaboration. One of the pedagogical considerations mentioned by the faculty and student participants in this collaboration was the importance of teaching about research process rather than a focus on simply applying research results. University members likewise need to learn the process of earning the trust of agency staff—at all levels—by taking the time and patience to learn about the working environment and expectations of staff and respecting the knowledge base or “street credibility” of front line staff. Relationship building takes time and ideally, should be done before the need for a grant submission or student placement. Here again, identifying one key person to help navigate the agency can be invaluable. For example, one community-based organization had a relationship with a clinical psychologist at a local university for five full years when a community-based participatory proposal was announced by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). Because of the well-established relationship and the strong trust the faculty member had built with staff over several years of relationship development and mutual knowledge-building, the grant was quickly written and has received a very good, potentially fundable, score.

The most effective learning experiences for students in the agency are to be embedded in an existing relationship between the faculty person and the agency. While students do perform essential tasks for the agency, the organizational mission is to provide direct services, not educate students, and this must be carefully considered during the process of collaboration. Often, student requirements must be fit into the academic year but the dynamic environment of direct service can make an unpredictable time frame for a student project. In one instance, a community-based organization spent the better part of the year helping a student respond to the Human
Subjects Review process; the time frame required for the Institutional Review Board review and the student’s timeline differed, leaving little time for conducting the actual project. The result, sadly, was a diluted version of what could have been a very interesting study. Only when all parties take an active role in the student’s progress and work together to balance their complementary goals will the student—and the partnership—succeed.

Open communication around issues of race and cultural competency are critical to the success of the collaborative partnership. Acknowledging the role that institutional racism and the historic conduct of research may play both the organization (and client) perceptions of research is crucial for establishing the trust necessary for a strong collaborative partnership; “Tuskegee” still exerts historical pain in the form of understandable, institutionalized distrust that can only be addressed if all stakeholders are willing to participate in the dialogue and discuss issues of racism, as well as privilege. This is also true of historical sexism, classism, and heterosexism as well. Partners must critically examine these issues at the outset of the relationship and be willing—and able—to continue this examination at different phases of the collaboration, whenever they arise. The communication should be sensitive, understanding, non-judgmental, and respect the differences of each culture. At times, this might require a formal structure within which to hold such a discussion that breaks down perceived power differentials between members of the community and members of the formal research team. For example, a meeting dedicated to the discussion of race in research, facilitated by a member of the community agency if possible, can provide an opportunity to offer differing perspectives and avoid misunderstandings or presumptions among participants.

**Faculty Perspectives**

From the academic faculty perspective, CBPR maximizes the potential for finding direct relevance from one’s research within settings of practice or grassroots movements within the community. For many scholars, the notion of being “relevant” in one’s research agenda is important to faculty identity, particularly faculty in the applied social sciences (Stoecker, 2003). An additional benefit to faculty involved in both research and teaching roles is the opportunity for irreplaceable hands-on student learning about the community engagement process, not only research methods and outcomes of research.

Miskovic and Hoop (2006) poignantly illustrate the learning inherent in community-based research that ultimately may lead to social change; the critical pedagogy described is difficult to teach in a traditional classroom setting, but affords students the opportunity to engage in projects that advance the intersections among social work practice, research methods, and proactive promotion of social justice. As the authors also point out, academic freedom may be advanced when students are afforded the opportunity to explore social justice collaboratively with the community in an engaged process of social change. Another important pedagogical consideration is teaching about research process rather than simply outcomes. As stated by Primavera (2004), “To avoid the wasteful trapping of an ahistorical, decontextualized approach to community problems and to truly make our work available for replication, it is important that we communicate to others not only what we do but how we do it” (p. 182). If we desire to teach authentically about issues of issue of power, culture, and privilege that emerge in the process of creating and sustaining partnerships with historically disadvantaged communities, this critical perspective is vital. Students need to observe and discuss processes of community engagement that work well, as well as those that are struggling. For example, a faculty member may introduce critical dialogue in a program evaluation around a “stuck point” such as who ultimately owns the data or whether to approach an agency regarding IRB approval and formal consent procedures for a program evaluation activity that the agency wants for internal use but the faculty member may wish to write up for publication. In both cases, there are differential needs and expectations between the agency and the faculty member that are affected by power, whether real or perceived. When we engage students in an active discourse and learning process, the doors to critical and open dialogue about difficult issues of social justice and divergent stakeholder needs emerge for the next generation of social work practitioners and scholars. Students can be empowered to have a voice for their own learning needs as well as infusing ideas and perspectives that can help transform the university-community partnership process.

Faculty members are often engaged in multiple roles with multiple stakeholders simultaneously. For example, one project may provide opportunity to initiate critical discourse with students about
their observations of institutional power, social class, or racism, actively engage with community partners about their own perceptions and experiences, and negotiate with administration about competing demands between faculty time and community needs. The faculty member may be in a liaison position, perhaps even brokering and advocating between the concerns of the community and the concerns of academia. The faculty member has the ability to be keenly aware of power dynamics when they first emerge, and may take on the responsibility of bringing these observations to the table so that open dialogue can take place around issues such as historical, institutionalized racism, or ongoing social and political inequities in distribution of resources.

The Partnership Process Guidelines reflect the faculty member’s stance of trying to be authentic in a desire to have research make a difference in the lives of people and organizations along with the desire to make an impact on her or his area of scholarly expertise. Designing and advocating for overlapping tasks that can balance and integrate the faculty member’s roles with research, scholarship, and teaching can be a part of the partnership discussion as a way to assert the faculty member’s desire to balance required scholarship and job performance with a desire to benefit the community. The faculty member’s challenge is not to precariously stand with one foot in each side of the university-community partnership, but to embrace a role as a bridge to open communication, giving voice to the situations and experiences in which she or he feels pressure to join with one side or the other in various aspects of the partnership so that the system’s communication is enhanced through the process.

**Student Perspectives**

University-community partnerships provide excellent opportunities for students to engage with course content through real-world illustrations and physical and intellectual connections among students, community, and interdisciplinary research teams. The literature asserts that students may be missing out on key aspects of learning without a focus on the real-world applications of course content (Butin, 2005; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Foreman Kready, 2011; Nadel, Majewski, & Sullivan-Cosetti, 2007). Illustrations from and involvement with partnerships are important strategies for reconnecting student learning with critical thinking and application of course material. Wallace (2000) posits that educational alienation exists in areas where students often experience missed connections; at the top of this list of critical areas is alienation from the community. This assessment of educational alienation is consistent with the literature on the consequences of approaching higher education from a compartmentalized fashion.

Marullo and Edwards (2000) argue that the banking model of higher education has taken over as the leading modality in many educational frameworks. This process is characterized as being mechanistic and robotic in nature such that students are trained to “borrow” information from textbooks and instructors, “withdraw” what is needed at the given time with a sense of immediate gratification, and simply “deposit” a restated version of this information without any “investment” or application outside of the context of the course assignment (Marullo & Edwards, 2000; Wallace, 2000). The end result is students’ perceptions of the classroom and higher education in general as a place where critical thinking and application are irrelevant. Through critical discourse in the classroom, the lived experiences of faculty members and community members engaged in partnerships can be used to catapult student learning.

Perhaps recognized as one of the most common forms of community engagement and critical pedagogy approaches, the inquiry strategies indicative of service-learning courses are distinctive due to the unique component of reflexive learning where students can integrate learning in community context as well as through analysis and application to academic learning (Fisher, Fabricant, & Simmons, 2004). We suggest that faculty “borrow” pedagogical strategies from this approach and engage their own intellectual creativity in order to develop learning environments that encourage relevance and critical thought. Specific strategies include the use of a critical pedagogy to utilize the faculty role as facilitator and co-learner toward the goal of developing student critical thinking skills; the incorporation of speakers to broaden the reach of community voice; the introduction of case studies from partnership activities; and the inclusion of pertinent (and recent) research illustrations and hands-on opportunities to work with the community.

Likewise, we assert that community-based research initiatives provide excellent opportunities for the infusion of material gleaned from partnerships. We suggest that community-based
research curriculum in order to ground course material in real-world examples that will frame class discourse around critical social justice issues. When encouraging students to engage in community-based research as a part of a course, faculty should take an active role in helping navigate some potential roadblocks to success. One specific example is the possible conflict between the academic timeline and that of the community partner. Students have a priority of producing a paper, while line staff rightfully prioritize client crises ahead of student projects. Through dialogue, a balance needs to be struck between faculty expectations, student time in completing assignments, and fitting a project into the daily demands of agency business. One helpful faculty role may be to serve as mentors who model the qualities of a collaborative working relationship that students may aspire to develop in their own work with community partners.

University-community partnership does not need to be limited to the classroom setting and can be an exceptional enhancement to the student experience in undergraduate and graduate level programs including internship/externship, field practicum, independent study, and dissertation research. Quality partnership development takes time. Instead of being pessimistic about the time constraint issues or focusing on less than successful experiences of past students, faculty and students may collectively engage in discussions about a project that demonstrates a goodness of fit with the needs of the student and the community stakeholders. Specific examples include the development of “backup plans” for anticipated differences in timelines or grouping students into multi-person research teams to make the process more manageable while not compromising the quality of the experience or overall expectation. Using this approach, the faculty member is mentoring the student by modeling an optimistic and solution-focused approach in such a way that provides for a challenging as well as supportive learning environment. Additionally, students in professions such as social work, nursing, counseling, and education are often in the process of shifting from clinician/practitioner to researcher. Students may desire to work with an agency where they previously were an intern or employee, but attention should be given to the need to openly communicate about and redefine the student role from one of supervisee, manager, or service provider to one of collaborator, researcher, or consultant.

It would be indicative of a commodity model of education to view students as the “revolving door” members of research teams. We recommend instead that students involved in university-community partnerships be viewed as participatory stakeholders. A good place to begin would be for all stakeholder groups to brainstorm and take into account the possible roadblocks that may be experienced by students involved with various stages of the project. Combining this awareness with the use of critical pedagogy and the infusion of university-community partnership content across the curriculum will provide campus and community partners with a space for dialogue in which all stakeholders, including students, are vital partners with an equal voice.

Administrative Perspectives

In order to be successful in establishing university-community partnerships, it is imperative that there is evidence of philosophical buy-in, as well as fiscal and human resource support for these initiatives from administration, starting at the university level. Although it is unlikely that any university would explicitly say that they don’t want faculty to be engaged in developing community partnerships, the reality is that some institutional requirements unintentionally become barriers to these relationships actually developing; this is particularly true in the case of formal guidelines around workload, promotion, and tenure (Foreman Kready, 2011). The administrative perspective offers concrete examples of ways in which one university strives to overcome barriers to engagement.

Conceptual support to the development of these partnerships includes integration of university-community partnership language into part of their mission statement as an authentic expression of their identity and commitment. For example, as stated in the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) Strategic Plan: “Great universities are characterized by a strong sense of community. Staff, administrators and faculty working together with a unified sense of purpose and a shared vision for the University will engage the community” (VCU 2020 Strategic Plan, 2006).

In addition to having a strategic theme or mission statement promoting community partnerships, universities can also endeavor to make community collaboration or community engagement language a part of the institution’s promotion and tenure policies, which begins to address the often disproportionate emphasis
between community-engaged research and traditional research activities. By institutionalizing this language, the establishment of these meaningful relationships can be recognized as a significant part of faculty scholarship, giving credence to both the academic and as well as the community partner. A phrase that has entered academic vernacular, community-engaged scholarship, attempts to broadly capture and formally recognize the community-based scholarly work of faculty from multiple disciplines; this may be operationalized by the institution and included as a form of scholarship recognized during promotion and tenure.

Importantly, building the capacity for university-community partnership also involves fiscal and human resource support. As an example of enacting this support, VCU developed a Division of Community Engagement, directed by a vice provost to promote and support all types of community partnerships. This office hired a community research liaison to serve as a conduit and advocate for faculty and their community partners. Also, the university, through the Division of Community Engagement, provides other incentives that support faculty community engagement: providing $100,000 annual university-community engagement grant opportunities (up to $20,000 per grant) along with a smaller community service associates awards program that rewards faculty for collaborative work with community partners.

In conjunction with the university initiatives, the School of Social Work has also increased its focus on community collaborations. Through a strategic planning process, the faculty identified the need to develop a center for practice, research, and community collaboration that focuses on social and economic justice as one of its themes. The dean also established an associate dean for community engagement position to develop and oversee all community-based research activities, to manage the continuing education program, to direct the field instruction department and to monitor all international activities for the school.

Probably one of the more critical roles that the associate dean has fulfilled at the school has been to help faculty interested in community-based initiatives navigate the university requirements for funded research. Providing administrative support in completing the sponsored programs forms, developing budgets, working with grants and contracts, guiding IRB applications, along with the coordinating faculty effort reporting with the school’s financial department are all vital to promoting the development of university-community partnerships. These activities are not just tangibly helpful, but also promote social justice. Administrators must be advocates of distributive justice, insuring that the many levels of resources that have been historically “owned” by the university partner (i.e. payment, recognition, in-kind support, promotion) are distributed in the most equitable ways possible among stakeholder groups.

**Implications**

As defined first by Rawls (1971) and then applied to social work education by Galambos (2008), the tenet of distributive justice often forms the philosophical foundation of university-community partnerships. This is applicable not only to the overarching aims of the partnership around a common social problem, but also in the dynamics of the partnership itself. Community organizational staff, faculty, students, and administrators must become attuned to the nuanced ways in which distributive social justice operates within their partnerships on a daily basis, decision by decision.

Open and fluid communication is clearly a vital component of university-community partnership, promoting distributive social justice where the tangible and intangible resources associated with research (funding, human capital, intellectual property, publication, recognition, reputation) are brought to the table, discussed, and distributed equally among partners through a process of consensus over time. This process may be fraught with moments of impasse and power differentials that differ from traditional forms of research where the “principal investigator” under direction from her or his university administrator ultimately held the power and control within a research relationship. It is complicated work to address historical power and inequity, and it involves concerted effort to not slip into institutional habits of “the way things have always been done” that may inadvertently perpetuate a status quo of inequalities and power differentials. The critical pedagogy reflected by faculty and student perspectives echoes the community’s vocalization that much can be learned by conversing about both what one hopes and expects as well as the realities of competing demands among stakeholder groups. In the guidelines we propose, there is no presumption of ultimate power: the process is to dialogue and reach consensus with all parties fully
aware of each other’s perspectives, concerns, as well as hopeful expectations.

In conclusion, we offer our individual perspectives and collaboratively developed guidelines as a way to facilitate dialogues among multiple stakeholders that each of the authors of this manuscript realizes are vital to a thriving partnership. The unifying commitment to social justice by the authors’ common backgrounds in the field of social work compels us to progressive action that builds strengths in both the community and the university partner to enhance their individual missions and goals, as well as achieve the objectives of their collaborative partnership. The Partnership Process Guidelines offers a starting point that can be the basis for future scholarship on the outcomes and social justice impact of the collaborative work that emerging as central in our discipline as well as others, and offers tangible evidence of our commitment to social justice.

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Using Garden-Based Service-Learning to Work Toward Food Justice, Better Educate Students, and Strengthen Campus-Community Ties

Dave Aftandilian and Lyn Dart

Abstract
In this article, we present several approaches for using garden-based service-learning to work toward food justice, better educate undergraduate students, and strengthen campus-community ties. We begin by introducing several key concepts related to food justice, community gardens as a strategy for strengthening food security and community development, and service-learning as a pedagogical tool for educating students about social justice, civic engagement, and personal responsibility for positive social change. We then discuss three of our service-learning projects in depth from an interdisciplinary perspective: the Fairmount Community Garden, the North Side Garden Survey, and the Como Community Garden. We evaluate the success of our approaches using multiple measures and identify the benefits our approaches have provided for undergraduates, community partners, communities served by the gardens, educators, and our university. We also discuss lessons we have learned, offer suggestions for best practices to follow in developing future garden-based service-learning projects, and compare and contrast our pedagogy with that of critical service-learning.

Introduction
Over the past four years, students and faculty from Texas Christian University have partnered with several local nonprofit organizations to work toward food justice, including strengthening community food security, through gardening initiatives. These initiatives include service-learning projects that students complete in collaboration with community partners in Fort Worth. We argue that garden-based service-learning projects like these offer an effective pedagogical strategy for emphasizing a hands-on, social justice-oriented approach to learning.

In this article, we discuss several approaches we have developed to use garden-based service-learning projects to work toward food justice, better educate undergraduate students, and strengthen campus-community ties. We begin by introducing several key concepts related to food justice. Next we show how community gardens can be an effective tool for enhancing food security and addressing other social justice issues, and review the literature on garden-based service-learning and critical service-learning. The bulk of the article focuses on three projects completed by our students involving the Fairmount Community Garden (Figure 1), the North Side Garden Survey, and the Como Community Garden in Fort Worth. We evaluate the success of these projects, and discuss the lessons we have learned from them in terms of best practices for garden-based service-learning. We then compare and contrast our pedagogy with that of critical service-learning. Finally, we look ahead to some future initiatives we and our community partners are planning.

From Food Insecurity to Community Food Security and Food Justice
According to the USDA, food security means “access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life”; by contrast, food insecurity refers to people who “were, at times, uncertain of having, or unable to acquire, enough food for all household members because they had insufficient money and other resources for food” (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2011, pp. 2, 4-5). The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) offers the following more detailed definition of food security, which was first adopted at the 1996 World Food Summit: “Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (EC-FAO Food Security Programme, 2008, p.1).

Food insecurity is a growing concern throughout the United States. where 48.8 million people live in food insecure households (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2011). Texas ranks second nationally in food insecurity, with 18.8% of its population living in food insecure households (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2011). The prevalence of food insecurity in

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our community of Fort Worth, Texas is 17.9% and affects approximately 143,000 individuals, with an estimated 44% of this population ineligible for federally funded nutrition assistance programs (Feeding America, 2011). As the USDA’s definition of food insecurity above suggests, “the primary cause of food insecurity is poverty. . . . Since the need for food is related to biology, not economics, a person with a low income needs to spend a higher percentage of his or her income to meet basic food needs than does a middle- or high-income person” (Allen, 2004, p. 23; see also Poppendieck, 1998).

Both the federal government and grassroots groups have been working to address the increasing impact of food security nationwide. At the grassroots level, the community food security movement, which started in the 1990s, has focused on localizing food production to improve access to nutritious food for food insecure households and to build sustainable food systems. Hamm and Bellows (2003) define community food insecurity as “a situation in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice” (p. 40).

Community food security programs are meant to alleviate food insecurity over the long term by strengthening local capacity for food production, processing, and marketing (Allen, 2004, pp. 44-46). In other words, advocates work to build and strengthen local or community food systems. “Community food systems are collaborative efforts to build locally based food economies that emphasize social health, environmentally sustainable practices, and economic strength through their food production and processing practices. Community self-reliance is integral to the concept of local food systems because community residents are engaged in all phases of planning, evaluation and implementation” (Lutz et al., 2007, p. 3). Thomas Lyson (2004) calls these developing local food systems “civic agriculture,” and Audrey Maretzki and Elizabeth Tucker manty (2007) describe them as combining social and environmental movements related to local food with a political agenda. Programs have included support for a broad range of solutions involving local food systems, including farmers’ markets, community kitchens, locally grown and processed foods, urban and community supported agriculture, and community gardening (Community Food Security Coalition, n.d.).

More recently, local food movement advocates have combined their insights with those of environmental justice advocates to develop a new concept called food justice. As Alison Hope Alkon and Julian Agyeman (2011) explain,

The food justice movement combines an analysis of racial and economic injustice with practical support for environmentally sustainable alternatives that can provide economic empowerment and access to environmental benefits in marginalized communities. Its race- and class-conscious analysis expands that of the food movement to include not only ecological sustainability but also social justice (p. 6).

Robert Gottlieb and Anupama Joshi (2010) spell out their specific vision for food justice as “ensuring that the benefits and risks of where, what, and how food is grown and produced, transported and distributed, and accessed and eaten are shared fairly” (p. 6).

At TCU, we have developed our garden-based service-learning pedagogy as a response to food insecurity, and have used the visions of community food security and food justice advocates as goals we and our students will work toward with our community partners.

Community Gardens as Part of the Solution to Urban Food Insecurity and Other Social Justice Issues

Community gardening is, of course, only one method that local communities can use to work toward community food security and food justice. People can also grow food for themselves in their own individual gardens, assuming they have the needed gardening know-how, time, and access to sufficient fertile land (e.g., if they own or rent a house with its own backyard). What sets community gardening apart from such individual gardens is encapsulated in the word “community.” Mark Winne (2008), former executive director of the Hartford Food System, defines community gardening as gardening “in community with others...to achieve something that benefits all” (p. 51). And in answer to the question, What is a community garden?, the American Community Gardening Association responds: “Very simply, it is: any piece of land gardened by a group of people” (http://www.communitygarden.org/learn/).

At least since Hazen Pingree’s Potato Patch movement began in Detroit in the mid-1890s, community gardens have been seen as an important
solution for increasing access to fresh, nutritious produce among urban populations in the United States (Gottlieb & Joshi, 2010; Lawson, 2005; Pinderhughes, 2003). More recently, community gardening has been identified as one of several viable strategies for improving food security for families with limited income. Community gardens are good ways to address food insecurity because they provide easy access to low-cost produce for gardeners and their families (see, e.g., Wakefield et al., 2007); they can be highly productive (Pinderhughes, 2003); and they have a proven track record of improving nutrition among the gardeners and their families (Draper & Freedman, 2010; also Alaimo et al., 2008).

Moreover, community gardening can also help communities work toward social justice in other ways (Lawson, 2005). By working together on a garden, community members can build social capital that they can later spend on other efforts to strengthen their communities (Draper & Freedman, 2010). Perhaps even more importantly, community gardens can help lay the groundwork for future community organizing efforts by connecting people to each other across race, class, age, etc.; by fostering a sense of responsibility for the community’s welfare; and by building community leadership and offering a central safe space in which community organizing can happen (Draper & Freedman, 2010; Kirby, 2008; Levkoe, 2006; Pinderhughes, 2003; and Woelfle-Erskine, 2003).

To help bring some of these documented benefits of community gardens to our local communities, and in response to requests from partner agencies, the Fort Worth-based Tarrant Area Food Bank (TAFB) began a new Community Garden Program in spring 2010. The program has also received significant financial support from the Tarrant County Public Health Department. To assist people most in need, the program focuses on communities that have been identified as being especially food insecure (i.e., “food deserts”). Katey Rudd serves as Community Garden Coordinator for TAFB, with the assistance of a volunteer Community Garden Board. TAFB provides leadership and community-building trainings for garden leaders; classes and workshops on gardening, cooking, nutrition, and related topics for all interested gardeners; a Community Gardening Resource Guide; materials to construct raised bed gardens; seasonal seed and/or starter plant kits; and ongoing technical support for addressing gardening challenges or other issues as they arise.

To participate, each potential garden site must be sponsored by a community-based organization, locate and secure land, conduct a community strengths and needs assessment and garden interest survey, find at least 15 volunteers who agree to help care for the garden, and identify three to five garden leaders (among other items specified in a Community Garden Partnership Agreement with TAFB). Those garden leaders serve as the main community contacts between TAFB and the gardens, and are also invited to serve on the TAFB Community Garden Board. Other board members include representatives from interested nonprofit organizations such as the Tarrant County Master Gardener Association and JPS Health Network, a Tarrant County public health network that includes John Peter Smith Hospital, whose mission is to ensure health care access for all citizens (see http://www.jpshealthnet.org), governmental agencies and academics (mainly the authors of this article).

By July 2012, 14 gardens had been established through the TAFB’s Community Garden Program. Community-based organizations that have sponsored gardens have included a number of local churches with food pantries, the YWCA in downtown Fort Worth, and several housing complexes with large refugee populations.

**Service-Learning Using Community Gardens**

Despite the long-term popularity of community gardens as a solution to community food insecurity and the proven success of service-learning as a pedagogical tool, few articles have been published on projects that combine these two approaches at the college or university level. Based on an extensive literature review, we have found that such pedagogical approaches fall into the following general categories: food/agriculture/nutrition, community or developmental psychology, environmental science, and K-12 education. Some instructors use service-learning in community gardens to teach ecological literacy related to food and hunger, agricultural economics, and horticulture, among other topics (Adelman & Sandiford, 2007; Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness, 2009; Chika et al., 2011; Dart, 2010; Jones & Popp, 2009). Others have employed service-learning in community gardens as a means to teach about community or developmental psychology (Langhout et al., 2002; Northwest Indian College, n.d.). Community gardens also are being used to teach college students about various aspects of environmental science (Agape Center for Service and Learning, 2010; Guenther, 2011). Finally, school gardens can also help students learn how to

**Garden-Based Pedagogy and Critical Service-Learning for Food Justice**

Although we found few examples of college-level curricula that use community gardens and service-learning to teach about and work toward social justice, specifically food justice, an extensive literature has developed since the 1990s that critiques the shortcomings of college-based service-learning programs in relation to social justice while offering creative revisions of such programs to address these issues (e.g., Brown, 2001; Butin, 2007; Marullo & Edwards, 2000; Rosenberger, 2000). This section reviews some of the key findings of this literature, focusing especially on recent work in critical service-learning by Tania Mitchell (2008a and 2008b) and Susan Benigni Cipolle (2010). We will then introduce our own garden-based pedagogy.

In a seminal article, Mitchell explains the differences between “traditional” and “critical” service-learning (2008b). Both kinds of service-learning seek to improve education by giving students hands-on exposure to work in local communities and can provide transformative educational experiences. However, according to Mitchell, Kinefuchi (2010), and others, traditional service-learning may not only produce no meaningful social change, but also may actually reinforce existing hierarchies and stereotypes because it often works from a charity mindset and does not help students think critically about the root causes of social problems and act to address those root causes (rather than just symptoms such as hunger; see Poppendieck, 1998). By contrast, “critical service-learning programs encourage students to see themselves as agents of social change, and use the experience of service to address and respond to injustice in communities…. The work to realize the potential of this pedagogy and avoid paternalism demands a social change orientation, working to redistribute power, and developing authentic relationships as central to the classroom and community experience” (Mitchell, 2008b, pp. 51–52).

Mitchell’s and others’ suggestions on best practices for critical service-learning pedagogy all begin with helping students develop critical consciousness/awareness of social justice issues, especially the root causes of systemic injustices. Cipolle (2010) offers an especially helpful model for helping students—specifically white, privileged students—develop critical consciousness (for other such models, see Mobley, 2011; Rhoads, 1997; Rice and Pollack, 2000; Rosenberger, 2000). Cipolle identifies four essential elements of critical consciousness development in general: self awareness, awareness of others, awareness of social issues, and ethic of service/change agent. Among white, privileged students, Cipolle describes three stages of critical consciousness development through which students pass during their lives: an initial or charity stage, when they want to help others, but out of a charity motive rather than a critical analysis of underlying issues; an emerging or caring stage, in which students start to see injustice, question past beliefs, and become compassionate based on their critical thinking; and finally a developing or social justice stage, in which students commit themselves to work as allies with oppressed groups to address the root causes of social injustice and make the system fairer for all.

Our garden-based pedagogy has been inspired by and aspires to many of the tenets of critical service-learning that were just described. However, we have also included alternative approaches that better reflect our pedagogical and practical goals, the kinds of students who take our classes and their level of preparation, and address potential problems with instructor-initiated social change activism in the classroom. We will discuss how our pedagogy both reflects and differs from critical service-learning after we have presented it.

As with critical service-learning, our garden-based service-learning pedagogy begins with the premise that the projects our students undertake must balance the need to achieve practical goals set by our community partners with achieving student learning outcomes that foster awareness and understanding of food security concerns, as well as help students learn the skills they need to help effect change (Brown, 2001; Mitchell, 2008b). Specifically, service-learning experiences in our classes focus on achieving the dual goals of both working toward food justice in Fort Worth and helping students better learn about food insecurity and related topics, social and economic diversity, and the benefits of sustainable local food systems. Learning outcomes also focus on building students’ professional skills by applying classroom knowledge to help real people in their local communities, developing good citizenship and community-building skills, and strengthening campus-community ties. In the next section, we provide a brief overview of
three such projects we have conducted through the departments of Sociology and Anthropology and Nutritional Sciences at TCU, in partnership with members of the Tarrant Area Food Bank’s Community Garden Program.

**Three Garden-Based Service-Learning Projects in Fort Worth**

**Fairmount Community Garden**

Each spring since 2008, Aftandilian has taught an anthropology course entitled “Environmental Justice, Human Rights, and Agriculture.” For their final service-learning projects in the class, students work in small groups with community partner organizations to help improve some aspect of food justice in Fort Worth. In spring 2010, two groups of students worked to help install and publicize the Fairmount Community Garden. Fairmount is a mixed income community, and is also ethnically diverse, with large numbers of white and Latino/a residents, as well as some African American residents. Susan Harper, a certified master gardener and community resident, was selected by the Fairmount Neighborhood Association to be the Garden Manager, and worked with Aftandilian’s students; she is also a member of the TAFB Community Garden Program Advisory Board. Student groups helped prepare the site and install the garden beds, and also promoted the garden to community members by developing an informational flyer in both Spanish and English and distributing it door to door in the community.

**North Side Garden Survey**

To demonstrate different models of garden plot construction, composting, water collection, etc. for participants in their Community Garden Program, TAFB had planned to install a Learning Garden in the North Side community of Fort Worth. They had been given a long-term lease for a potential garden site in that neighborhood by the family of an employee. However, TAFB did not know whether local residents actually wanted a garden in their community, and if they did, what sort of garden they would prefer. Therefore, in spring 2011, another group of students from Aftandilian’s class worked with the TAFB Community Garden Coordinator to develop a survey and administer it on the North Side to answer these questions. Through their survey, the students learned that an overwhelming majority of the neighborhood (about 90%) was eager to have a garden available to them. However, two-thirds of those surveyed preferred to have a community garden in which they could grow fresh produce for themselves, rather than merely a learning garden that demonstrated gardening techniques. The students presented this finding to a meeting of the TAFB Community Garden Program subcommittee that was working on designing the North Side Learning Garden. In part because of the students’ survey research with the community, TAFB chose not to set up a learning garden on the North Side.

**Como Community Garden**

In fall 2010, the present authors collaborated with TAFB’s Community Garden Program and the Tarrant County Master Gardener Association on a service-learning community garden initiative to help meet the increasing need for expanding food assistance and nutrition education programs among community-based organizations in the Como neighborhood, including the Como Community Center. Under the direction of the TAFB Community Garden Coordinator and master gardeners, Dart’s dietetics students developed, team-taught, and evaluated a six-week after-school gardening and nutrition education program for elementary-age children (see also Dart, 2010). Program components for TCU students included (1) completing a five-week basic gardening training program taught by master gardeners; (2) completing a five-week training session led by the TAFB Community Garden Project coordinator that provided historical and current background information about the Como community and its residents, food security and insecurity, community food systems and food growing techniques, gardening as a tool for community and leadership development, and nutrition and garden-based education and teaching skills; (3) developing and teaching a garden-based curriculum linking food, nutrition, and plants from the garden at the elementary school level; (4) providing Eating Healthy Snack activities to enhance lesson content; and (5) engaging children in service-learning activities at the Como Community Garden to increase skills and knowledge about gardening and enhance their understanding of the importance of agriculture in building sustainable communities. Students completed this program in 2011 and 2012 as well.

**Methods for Evaluating Success of Garden-Based Service-Learning**

We use a variety of approaches to evaluate the effectiveness of garden-based service-learning...
projects. Aftandilian’s students have completed pre- and post-service self-evaluations since spring 2011 (North Side garden group only), and final post-service reflection papers since spring 2008 (both Fairmount and North Side groups). Each semester, Dart’s dietetics students complete an extensive online summative evaluation about their gardening experiences and outreach education based on Fink’s Taxonomy of Significant Learning (Fink, 2003). For the Como project, students also completed a pre- and post-program evaluation that assessed how much they knew about food security and insecurity; food growing systems and gardening skills; culture, community, and gardening; and nutrition- and garden-related education and teaching skills. In addition, community partners are asked to evaluate student learning and service performance each semester, and to assess whether and how these garden projects have helped their organizations achieve their goals.

Benefits of Garden-Based Service-Learning

Using these evaluation methods, as well as our own personal observations, we have documented benefits of garden-based service-learning for students, community partners, communities served by the gardens, educators, and our institution (TCU). In this section we will discuss benefits produced for each of these groups through the garden projects described above. We have organized this discussion around our three primary objectives for these projects: working toward food justice, helping students learn better, and strengthening campus-community ties.

Working Toward Food Justice

From the community point of view, one of the most important benefits of having new community gardens is easier access to low-cost, healthy, nutritious produce. For example, the Fairmount Community Garden Project has provided plots in which 76 families can raise vegetables, thereby strengthening community food security, improving nutrition, and helping balance family food budgets. Susan Harper, the Fairmount Garden Manager, said that “I’m not sure the garden would have ever been finished had it not been for all the TCU students…. [Y]our students contributed endless enthusiasm and a lot of hard physical work.”

From August 2011 to July 2012, the Como Community Garden donated 1,286 pounds of produce to local food pantries such as the Como Senior Community Center, to which it delivers fresh vegetables every week during the growing season. This figure does not include produce that volunteers from Como are encouraged to bring home to their own families. Local residents who volunteer in the garden also receive free training in how to grow their own produce from the Como Garden coordinator, Clarice Abuto. According to Ms. Abuto, “through the different gardening activities, volunteers learn how the different crops relate to each other, how to nurture the soil through crop rotation, and different methods of preventing soil erosion by wind and water runoff.” Ms. Abuto further notes that “the Como Community Garden has been vital in bringing residents together and providing a safe forum to address development issues.”

Our students have also observed that community gardens strengthen communities by providing a safe space where neighbors can get to know each other, building connections that can later be drawn upon to address other issues of concern to the community (i.e., gardens help build social capital). As one of the students who worked on the Fairmount project put it in their reflection paper, “while working in the garden I was able to witness and actually be a part of a community coming together. I watched firsthand as distanced neighbors became friends and shared ideas on their knowledge of the best way to grow a tomato.”

Finally, gardening also nurtures self-esteem and leadership skills among both community members and students. Carol Brown, director of the Como Community Center, said that “I think the class accomplished my goals: to see the [Como] kids learn leadership, how to work together, and live a healthier life.” TAFB Community Garden Coordinator Katey Rudd said that “the TCU students learned to teach in a garden environment, write lesson plans, manage children, create learner-centered and interactive classroom time, teach seed-to-table concepts and actually create a garden, and evaluate children for true learning. This was a tall order, but I was impressed by how they grew as educators and learners over the semester.”

Helping Students Learn Better

For our students, us as educators, and TCU, one of the most important benefits of garden-based service-learning projects is that they help our students learn better. Specifically, these garden projects provide students with firsthand knowledge about food justice and food insecurity, social and economic diversity and injustice, the benefits of sustainable food systems, and how to build them. Students also gain a sense of personal
and professional achievement and develop good citizenship and community-building skills.

Many of our students are limited in their knowledge and awareness of food security and insecurity before they enter our classes. For example, before they began working on the Como garden project, two-thirds of dietetics students felt that they knew little or nothing about food security and insecurity. But by the end of the project, all of the students involved in it had developed greater awareness and a “good-to-excellent” understanding of the varying characteristics of food insecure households, contributing factors and populations at high risk, and the health consequences of poor nutrition and inadequate dietary practices. Additionally, 83% of students reported that following their experiences they were “able to fully understand and discuss issues related to poverty, food insecurity, and public health concerns.”

Similarly, few of our students have much firsthand knowledge about social and economic diversity in relation to food insecurity at the beginning of class. As one student in the North Side Garden Survey group explained in their reflection paper, “Being raised in a fortunate family can create a type of ignorance towards the world that you live in. You become sheltered from learning about those who are not as fortunate. Me, being a fortunate person who participated in this project, made me realize that I have been unaware of other people’s struggles for something so simple like fresh vegetables.”

Through their hands-on garden projects, students also gain a sense of achievement and personal empowerment to address issues of food injustice such as food insecurity. For example, students in the North Side group had much higher average scores after than before their project in response to the self-evaluation question, “How confident do you feel in your ability to help solve some of the problems with global and local food injustice that we have been discussing in this class?” Group averages for Likert-scale responses to this question were 3.50/5.00 pre-service compared with 4.25/5.00 afterwards. As one of the students in the Fairmount group put it, “By passing out fliers and working side by side with the members of the Fairmount community, I got the satisfying feeling that I was actually making a difference in the community and making a direct impact on people’s lives. The outcome of our project was more than I had ever imagined. . . .”

Working on garden-based service-learning projects also helps students develop good citizenship and community-building skills. These learning outcomes are especially important at TCU, since our mission statement is “to educate individuals to think and act as ethical leaders and responsible citizens in the global community.” Dietetics students reported that their gardening service experiences allowed them to collaborate and build cooperative relationships for collective decision making, as well as for identifying and promoting common interests in the community. And several students were inspired to transplant their work in the Fairmount garden to other communities. An international student wrote that this project “opened my mind and showed me different ways of helping people. . . . I am going back to Panama and I want to make urban agriculture a way to help Panamanian communities.”

**Strengthening Campus-Community Ties**

Finally, our garden-based service-learning projects have also helped strengthen ties between our students and local Fort Worth communities, as well as between us and our community partners. For example, students in the North Side Garden Survey group felt much more connected to the community after completing their project. Their scores in response to the self-evaluation question, “How connected do you feel to the off-campus community in Fort Worth?” rose from an average of 2.50/5.00 before the project to 3.75/5.00 afterwards. The North Side students also noted this change in their reflection papers; one wrote that “One thing I really took with me from this community survey project was getting a feel for how other people live, even other people in the same city as me.” Students in the Fairmount group echoed this sentiment; as one student put it, the project gave them the chance “to get out and make real connections with people.”

These strengthened campus-community ties bring a number of benefits. First, students have a chance to step outside what several of them have described as “the TCU bubble” and share the experiences of people living in other Fort Worth communities. This is especially valuable for TCU students, most of whom come from economically privileged and ethnically homogenous (white) backgrounds. For us, working with community partners over a period of years gives us the chance to deepen our own community connections. For example, our work in garden-based service-learning led us to participate in TAFB’s Community Garden Project, which has helped link us to a much wider network of community partner organizations.
For our community partners, including Feed by Grace, TAFB, and the Tarrant County Master Gardener Association, working with us has lent academic legitimacy to their efforts, which they have been able to leverage into several successful grant applications. Finally, TCU benefits as well, both because garden-based service-learning projects help our students achieve the TCU mission described above, and because having students and faculty actively and equally partnering with local organizations, as we do, improves TCU’s image in the community.

Challenges and Best Practices for Garden-Based Service-Learning

Of course, we have also encountered a number of challenges in our garden-based service-learning projects, which fall under the general categories of communication, curriculum and student learning, and pragmatic issues. Because these challenges were similar across all of our projects, we will discuss them together in this section and explain how we have modified our approaches in response to each set of challenges, thereby developing a set of experientially grounded best practices for garden-based service-learning.

Communication

The two communication challenges we have encountered most often are the difficulty of coordinating interactions between community partners, students, and/or faculty, and a misunderstanding of the scope and goals of the service-learning partnership between the community partners and students or educators. For example, students in the Fairmount Garden group often found it difficult to coordinate work days with the garden manager’s schedule. And in past projects (not discussed here), both of us have also had students who misunderstood the needs of their community partners, and therefore took their projects in an inappropriate direction.

To address communication challenges like these, both practical and pedagogical solutions can be effective. On a practical level, we have found that communications can be streamlined by asking one student in each project group to serve as the “communicator” responsible for channeling all contacts among students, community partners, and faculty. We have also learned that it is important to keep in touch with our community partners on a regular basis not just throughout the course of the project or semester, but throughout the year (Mitchell, 2008b, pp. 60-61). For example, we have avoided many potential communication problems by arranging potential projects with partners the semester before a course is taught, and clearly setting out responsibilities for faculty, students, and community partners. Instructors should also follow up with community partners to seek their feedback after a project has been completed. Seeking and incorporating such feedback helps develop and maintain long-term partnerships.

On the pedagogical level, faculty and community partners should work together to create true community-university partnerships in which community issues and concerns about food justice are as important—in terms of planning, implementation, and evaluation—as student learning and development (Brown, 2001; Mitchell, 2008b; Rosenberger, 2000). We also seek our partners’ input in all aspects of garden service experiences, including developing curricula and assignments, teaching students and supervising service experiences, and establishing learning outcomes and evaluation criteria (cf. Brown, 2001; Marullo & Edwards, 2000; Mitchell, 2008b; Rice & Pollack, 2000). For example, in the Como project, master gardeners and the TAFB Community Garden Coordinator were invited to co-author student assignment sheets and methods for evaluating student performance, and also participated actively in developing curricula, educating students, and evaluating their work.

Curriculum and Student Learning

We have also encountered challenges regarding both our curricula and student learning. In terms of student learning, it can be difficult to encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning, i.e., to be self-directed learners, which is crucial for service-learning to succeed (Rhoads, 1997; Mitchell, 2008b). We have used various methods to achieve this aim. Periodic self-evaluations by the students can help identify potential problems in this regard while there is still time to resolve them. Accountability checks can also be built into graded assignments. For example, Aftandilian requires students to submit a group progress report midway through the time allotted for their projects. These progress reports are graded, and provide an often-needed wake-up call to the students.

Some of Dart’s dietetics students have also had difficulty seeing the connection between garden-based service-learning and course learning outcomes related to typical applications in dietetic practice. Teaching strategies that have proven successful in addressing these challenges have included revising
Many of our students share this frustration; the goals that we, our community partners, and/or our students have set for our projects. Initial training sessions in the classroom addressing issues with community food security were essential for student learning and helped in bridging the gap in their garden-based service-learning experiences. Dietetics students also complained about too much time being devoted to the lecture portion of gardening training sessions and not enough time for hands-on instruction in the garden. In response to these critiques, Dart and the master gardeners have revised the gardening curriculum to be less technically detailed and more focused on teaching just the basics of fruit and vegetable gardening that are most applicable for a community gardener. As much of this curriculum as possible is conveyed through hands-on activities.

Finally, to help students achieve some of the learning outcomes described above, we have also given them opportunities to reflect upon and evaluate their service experiences (see also Jacoby, 1996; Mitchell, 2008a and 2008b; Rice & Pollack, 2000; Rosenberger, 2000). Working with food insecure communities has challenged our students to move beyond familiar “comfort zones,” and reflection is essential for this type of transformative learning. When they reflect about service experiences that introduced them to social issues and concerns, our students learn to question their assumptions and values, and in turn gain a new understanding and perspective about their work. Likewise, by engaging students in formative and summative evaluation, we can help them develop skills that are crucial for assessing social systems and issues, as well as the impact of their service-learning. Student evaluations also elicit valuable feedback about service outcomes, provide a forum that encourages personal responsibility in conveying information, and empower students to express their ideas and offer solutions for change.

Pragmatic Issues

Finally, pragmatic concerns often arise. One of the most common is that the limited timespan available for garden-based service-learning projects in the context of one class can make it difficult to achieve the goals that we, our community partners, and/or our students have set for our projects. Many of our students share this frustration; the most frequently expressed student complaint is that they wished they had more time to work on their projects. While we cannot address this issue directly for students in the context of a single course (there are only so many weeks in a semester), we are working to provide longer-term opportunities for students to continue their work with community organizations through potential semester- or summer-long internships and a minor in Community Engagement (see Conclusion).

From faculty and community perspectives, we have found the best solution to this issue is to nurture long-term partnerships and university engagement with the same community partners in gardening initiatives over a period of several years, rather than just for a one-time service project. Our commitment to building long-term relationships has also allowed our community partners to expand their service work, providing our students with more and greater skill-building opportunities that not only enhance their personal and professional development but also work toward food justice (Marullo & Edwards, 2000; Mitchell, 2008b). Cultivating service-learning partnerships over time can also help campuses and community to do more to ensure a continuum for community-building. For example, by partnering with Fort Worth community members with similar interests, we have drawn increased attention to food security issues and have been able to collaborate on funding opportunities for possible community-wide food policies and future garden sites in “food desert” neighborhoods, such as TAFB’s Community Garden Project.

Garden-Based Service-Learning Pedagogy and Critical Service-Learning

Earlier in this article we reviewed the literature on critical service-learning, and noted that our pedagogy had been inspired by and aspires to these approaches. Now that we have presented key aspects of our pedagogy, we would like to reflect on how our approach is both similar to and different from those recommended by scholars of critical service-learning. We hope our reflections will prove helpful to other instructors who draw on critical service-learning and related community engagement theories. We will organize our discussion into the three themes that Tania Mitchell has argued should characterize critical approaches to service-learning: social change orientation, working to redistribute power, and developing authentic relationships (Mitchell, 2008b).
Social Change Orientation

In critical service-learning, instructors should help students learn about the root causes of social injustice and their impacts on communities; connect their service to broader issues like these; reflect on their own position of relative power and privilege; and advocate for positive social change (Mitchell, 2008b). Mitchell, Cipolle (2010), and other scholars have explained that to adopt this orientation, both students and instructors need to develop a critical consciousness regarding social justice.

We assign readings in our classes that help students learn about social injustice, both its sources and its impacts on communities. For example, Aftandilian frames his course using the concepts of environmental justice and environmental racism. “Environmental racism” refers to the disproportionate impacts of environmental hazards such as the location of toxic waste dumps on communities of color, while “environmental justice” describes what people in those communities are fighting for (Pellow, 2002, p. 8). Students read about and then apply in class and in a paper three environmental justice analytical frameworks developed by Robert Bullard (2005), David Naguib Pellow (2002), and the National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit (1991). We then refer back to these frameworks throughout the class and use them to analyze cases of social injustice related to food. Perhaps the most important insight of all these frameworks is their focus on the central question, Who benefits from each case of environmental injustice, and who pays the costs? Other instructors who focus on environmental aspects of social injustice might benefit from adopting this framing as well, which to our knowledge has seldom, if ever, been discussed in the literature on critical service-learning.

Community members are also invited into our classrooms, so that they can share their social justice challenges with the students in their own words. For example, in spring 2012, Aftandilian invited local community development advocate Shirley Lewis to discuss the environmental and social justice challenges her South Side community has faced and the solutions they have developed.

We also try to bring students into the communities they will be working in before their service-learning projects begin so that they can see community resources and challenges for themselves. Katey Rudd guides dietetics students on a windshield survey of the Como neighborhood where they will be teaching children about healthy eating and gardening, and provides them with additional historical and contemporary information about the community.

Although we do not ask students to reflect directly on their own position of power and privilege relative to the people they will be working with on their service-learning projects (reflection to encourage self-awareness, a key component of critical consciousness development according to Cipolle, 2010), we do provide open-ended reflection opportunities which some students use for this purpose. For example, in response to a comprehensive survey that Dart administers after her students’ work in Como, one student said that “I have heard a lot about cultural eating habits, but this was the first real experience that I had with it. Como is mainly lower income minorities. After spending time with the children, I had a better understanding of why nutrition is not as prevalent in their culture.” Another wrote that “The Como Community Garden project experience definitely changed my view on behavioral traits typical of people who live in low-income areas like Como.” We recognize the value of providing more formal opportunities for students to engage in self-awareness oriented reflections like this, and are considering adding such a writing assignment in future classes.

Unlike some critical service-learning models, we do not expect students participating in our garden-based service-learning projects to engage in advocacy for social change. We have chosen not to do so for several reasons, primarily related to our students’ socioeconomic background and level of critical consciousness when they arrive in our classes. Most of the students in our classes are white and from wealthy backgrounds. Many have never interacted directly with people of color before, and if they have, it has primarily been in charity settings. Most have never taken a social justice oriented course before, nor any that include service-learning.

In Cipolle’s terminology, our students are very much at the beginning or “charity” stage of critical consciousness development. We feel it is our job as responsible instructors to meet these students where they are, and help them to move toward the next “caring” stage of critical consciousness, not force social change advocacy down their throats. Indeed, doing so may turn students off from working toward positive social change, since they may dismiss what they perceive as overly activist perspectives as “biased” (Seider, 2009). Instead, we agree with Tania Mitchell, who
wrote that it is better to “support students where they are and affirm the commitments they are able and willing to make” (Mitchell, 2008a, p. 10). As Mitchell learned from observing students in the Citizen Scholars Program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, “while some students felt prepared to engage in revolutionary action that challenged current structures and systems in an effort to transform society, others believed that continued involvement in service and acting with their votes to bring candidates holding similar values into office, were the appropriate next steps to acting on their commitments. It is important for instructors to recognize the validity of both positions” (Mitchell, 2008a, p. 10).

As Cipolle (2010) has pointed out, it takes time for students to develop their critical consciousness; this is a process that takes years, not months. “Realistically, given students’ maturity levels and varied experiences, only some reach the developing stage [social justice stage] by early adulthood. However, if students are equipped with critical-thinking skills, multiple service experiences, and a better understanding of themselves and the world, seeds are planted for continued growth toward critical consciousness” (pp. 14–15).

We have found Cipolle’s observations to hold true based on our own experiences with students. Although we do not expect students to advocate for social change while they are in our classes, we do hope that our pedagogy will plant the seeds for such advocacy in students’ minds and hearts. And we have some evidence to support that hope. Katey Rudd, who coordinates TAFB’s Community Garden Program, took both of our garden-based service-learning classes as a student and discovered a passion for food justice work through her experiences. Other alums have carried out community-based participatory research on food insecurity for their master’s degree, worked with small farmers in Central America and the Caribbean on sustainable development projects, sought careers with nonprofit organizations that serve low income residents of Fort Worth, and chosen to purchase produce for their food truck business from local community gardens run by refugees and homeless people.

Working to Redistribute Power

In addition to adopting a social change orientation, Tania Mitchell said that students and instructors engaged in critical service-learning should work to redistribute power to community members. Our garden-based pedagogy accomplishes this in several ways. First, as explained above, we work directly with our community partners to develop each of the service-learning projects. We also invite our community partners to give guest lectures in class, help create and revise our curriculum, teach the students in the field, and evaluate the students’ work. In addition, we remind our students throughout the semester that our community partners have the final say on how the projects will be carried out, not us or the students.

We also work to redistribute power by making sure that we and our students view our service as working with rather than for community members, empowering community residents to work on their own behalf (Saltmarsh et al., 2009, p. 10; Wade, 1997, p. 64; Wade, 2000, p. 97). Rather than just applying a band-aid solution to issues of food insecurity, teaching people to garden and helping them establish community gardens of their own help address some of the structural issues with lack of access to fresh, nutritious food that many communities face.

Finally, we also help level the playing field in terms of power dynamics between our students and community members by having both groups learn the same skills almost simultaneously (Mitchell, 2008b, 58). Before learning basic gardening techniques from the master gardeners, Dart’s dietetics students know next to nothing about how to grow vegetables. This means that when the students develop lesson plans later in the semester to teach elementary schoolchildren in Como how to garden, they are less likely to operate from a mindset of superiority, since they only just learned these skills themselves.

Developing Authentic Relationships

Mitchell identifies developing authentic relationships, relationships based on connection, as the last key aspect of critical service-learning. We strive to develop such relationships both between ourselves as instructors and the community organizations we work with, and between our students and community members. On the faculty/community side, we pursue long-term relationships with our community partners, working with the same partners over a period of years, not just a semester, so that we are better able to help them achieve their long-term goals and so that we have time to fix problems that may arise with one particular project to improve future ones (Mitchell, 2008b, pp. 60-61). And as described above, we strive to develop good communication with our community partners before, during, and after the
Finally, garden-based service-learning also helps in partnership with members of those communities. Strategies and community change-oriented service inequities, engaging them in problem-solving and empowering students to work to address these social inequities on individuals and communities, giving them direct experience with the effects of awareness of food insecurity and related issues, and it helps better educate students, fostering their critical service-learning pedagogy and emphasize the opportunity to implement many aspects of social justice approach to learning, while also working toward food justice for local communities.

Mitchell also urges instructors to help students establish authentic relationships by first reflecting on their own biases, and then being aware of both similarities and differences between themselves and community members as they do their service work (Mitchell 2008b, p. 59). While we do not formally require students to engage in such reflection, many choose to do so in their blog posts, post-service surveys, or final reflective papers. For example, one student wrote that “the gardening experiences really just exposed me to a part of the population that I haven’t had much interaction with. I grew up in white upper-middle-class suburbia and had very little interaction with low-income populations until I graduated from high school.” And one student who worked in the Fairmount Garden shared with the class that in his own neighborhood, nobody worked together on community projects, yet through this project he saw with his own eyes how another community was able to do just that and come together to create a garden.

**Future Directions for Garden-Based Service-Learning in Fort Worth**

Garden-based service-learning offers educators the opportunity to implement many aspects of critical service-learning pedagogy and emphasize a social justice approach to learning, while also working toward food justice for local communities. It helps better educate students, fostering their awareness of food insecurity and related issues, and giving them direct experience with the effects of social inequities on individuals and communities. And it empowers students to work to address these inequities, engaging them in problem-solving strategies and community change-oriented service in partnership with members of those communities. Finally, garden-based service-learning also helps strengthen campus-community ties.

As we emphasized earlier, effective garden-based service-learning pedagogies need to take the long view. For example, we are currently planning several future projects with our community partners. First, students will help evaluate the success of TAFB’s Community Garden Project, including the Como garden. Specifically, students will conduct on-site evaluations of each of the gardens that have been built as part of this initiative, looking for evidence of whether the gardens are being well maintained (e.g., presence of unplanted or weedy plots), whether gardeners are taking ownership of the gardens (e.g., by personalizing them with garden art), etc. The students will also conduct in-person interviews with gardeners to ask them their opinions of the gardens and their contributions to the community. Second, students will work with TAFB’s Community Garden Project and other community partners to establish new or expand existing gardens.

Also, as part of our institution’s upcoming reaccreditation, we helped lead an interdisciplinary team that proposed TCU implement a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) on Community Engaged Learning and Scholarship. This QEP would include incentives for faculty to create new service-learning classes and/or community-based participatory research initiatives, such as our garden-based service-learning pedagogy and related food justice research projects (Aftandilian, n.d.; Dart, 2010). Faculty would also participate in a semester-long training program in community engagement that would include an introduction to critical service-learning. Students would have the opportunity to deepen their interactions with community members by completing semester- or year-long internships with community-based organizations. They could choose to pursue a minor in Community Engagement. And they could also apply for a program that would give them the opportunity to take leadership roles in teaching other students about community engagement and working more directly with both faculty and community groups to set up service-learning courses, research initiatives, and other campus-community partnerships. Although our QEP was not selected in the end, we were able to significantly raise the profile of community engagement at TCU through the process of preparing a detailed QEP proposal and formally presenting it to the TCU community.

Finally, as more community gardens and other food justice-related initiatives crop up in Fort Worth, both we and our community partners...
are becoming increasingly aware of the need to coordinate our efforts to make them as effective as possible. Food policy councils have proven successful at achieving both these goals (Clancy et al., 2007; Winne, 2008, p. 161ff), and we have been helping found one in Tarrant County based on an organizational model developed by the Texas Hunger Initiative. Such an organization could provide continuing opportunities for service-learning and for supporting community efforts to work toward food justice.

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**Figure 1.** Fairmount Community Garden, one of the study sites, is mixed-income and ethnically diverse, with large numbers of white and Latino/a residents. Here, students are applying mulch.
Catalyst for Democracy? Outcomes and Processes in Community-University Interaction

Tami L. Moore

Abstract

Regional colleges and universities are unique in their historic commitment to serve the economic, social, and cultural interests of particular communities. Drawing on the findings of a multi-site case study of two regional institutions, this paper outlines the goals of community-university interaction, then focuses more specifically on the processes of collaboration as distinct from the participants’ desired outcomes. Separating goals from process in this way allows us to explore the civic/democratic impact of these initiatives beyond their economic impact. Findings suggest that when community-university engagement initiatives focus too narrowly on economic development goals, project leaders sometimes neglect the potential of engagement initiatives as catalysts for participatory democracy, thereby limiting input from traditionally under-represented groups. Scholars and practitioners can draw from community development literature, as well as the scholarship related to community-university engagement, allowing simultaneous attention to the nature of relationships between universities and the communities they serve and the process of building inclusive relationships.

“The first and most essential charge upon higher education is that at all its levels ... it shall be the carrier of democratic values, ideals, and processes. ... Its role in a democratic society is that of critic and leader as well as servant; its task is not merely to meet the demands of the present but to alter those demands if necessary, so as to keep them always suited to democratic ideals. Perhaps its most important role is to serve as an instrument of social transition, and its responsibilities are defined in terms of the kind of civilization society hopes to build.”

The President’s Commission on Higher Education, 1947
(as cited in Peters, 2010, p. xv)

Every day, the nation’s state colleges and universities demonstrate, in ways large and small, the inextricable linkages with their communities and with the world at large. These linkages, collectively referred to as ‘public engagement,’ are an essential part of the heritage of [regional] institutions [and] reflect a constant challenge to institutions to serve as ‘stewards of place’ ... in tackling the myriad of opportunities and issues facing our communities and regions.

American Association of State Colleges and Universities Task Force on Public Engagement, (AASCU, 2002, p. 5)

Introduction

In 1948, the President’s Commission on Higher Education positioned higher education institutions as key to strengthening democracy. More than 50 years later, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities described regional colleges and universities as part of the socio-economic fabric of the communities they serve. In this new climate, universities are no longer purely agents of democracy, nor simply “providers of educational services. They are also large economic institutions that either strategically or inadvertently play a major role in community economic development” (Dubb & Howard, 2007, p. 62). This paper draws on data from a multi-site case study of regional campuses with their origins in the normal school tradition to explore community-university partnerships as catalysts for community development and also for democracy. The story of engagement in each case reflected the key role educational institutions play in regional economic development (Drucker & Goldstein, 2007), and in doing so drew attention to voices that remain silent in the story line. This paper outlines the goals of the...
engagement, then focuses more specifically on the processes by which partnerships were established and maintained as distinct from the participants’ desired outcomes. Separating goals from process in this way allows us to better explore the civic/democratic impact of these initiatives beyond their important economic impact.

Key Concepts

Achbar, Simpson, Abbott, and Bakan (2004) operationalize the legal doctrine of corporate personhood (Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad, 1886; Trustees of Dartmouth College v. Woodward, 1819) in their critique of corporate behavior. I take a similar approach here, conceptualizing universities themselves as members of the geographic communities they serve, with the capacity to foster participatory democracy while contributing to the social and economic well-being of the region. I treat these partnerships as, at least in part, civic initiatives. This departs from the recent trend toward situating the university as partner in community economic development; these two roles need not be mutually exclusive. The argument is grounded in three key concepts: regional economic development, the role of higher education institutions in particular geographic regions, and participatory democracy.

Regional Economic Development

Regional development scholars and practitioners commonly examine university impact on a geographic region’s economic well-being (Drucker & Goldstein, 2007; Dubb & Howard, 2007). For example, economic impact studies by Anselin, Varga, and Acs (1997) and Sivitanidou and Sivitanides (1995) suggest that spatial/geographic spillover effects from knowledge production happen fairly uniformly, although these effects vary in magnitude and quality of impact from one region to the next. Jacobs and Doughtery (2006) highlight community colleges’ important contributions to workforce development. Sharp, Flora, and Killacky (2003) treat higher education administrators as key corporate/business actors in their study of business leaders building community social infrastructure. Keane and Allison (1999) argue that “[t]he value of higher education,” in the knowledge (or “learning”) economy “lies in the linkages and quality of [universities’] embeddedness in the local economy” (p. 896).

Participatory Democracy

In her study of the national discourse about higher education’s role in U.S. society, Pasque (2010) notes frames for characterizing higher education as both private and public good, as balanced in the mission of higher education, and as interconnected and articulated “with a voice of advocacy” (p. 31) aimed to increase access to higher education for students from traditionally under-represented groups. The private good perspective echoes the regional economic development literature; in this model, taxpayer investment in higher education is returned “solely through an investment in private individuals, who will then contribute to the public good by economic means” (p. 21). This frame, Pasque argues, has the “potential to further stratify the system of higher education in terms of race, gender, nationality, and class” (p. 42).

We need to understand more about the workings of participatory democracy in order to (continue) think(ing) about how universities might contribute. This line of thought is important now because of growing concerns about a shift first noted more than a decade ago: “Everyday Americans are increasingly mere spectators of public affairs” (Skopcol & Fiorina, 1999, p. 2). The continuing trend toward “bitter partisanship in national politics” (Mehaffy, 2005, p. 68) may not be reversible, but there is increasing hope for change by “remember[ing] and seek[ing] old advantages [of active citizen participation] in new ways” (Skopcol & Fiorina, 1999, p. 7).

Regional Colleges and Universities

By positioning the university as an active participant in community economic development, scholars and practitioners diminish the salience of traditional distinctions between town and gown. The notion of connecting universities and communities is not new (Veysey, 1965). What has changed over time is the intentional linking of university activities to the common good through community-university engagement initiatives (Boyer, 1996; Kellogg Foundation, 1999; Pasque, 2010). Ramaley (2000) describes regional colleges and universities, such as the two highlighted in this study as unique in their ability to address society’s “real problems” occurring at “neighborhood, regional, and international levels” (p. 232). Regional universities are rooted in the social networks of the particular geographic region they serve. From this perspective, community leaders and policy makers should, in turn, see state colleges and universities as valuable “knowledge asset[s] and resource[s]” (AASCU, 2002, p. 10).
us of some of these old advantages, in their origins as former normal schools. The normal school movement, strongest between 1890 and 1920, specifically emphasized the role of higher education to serve the public good by strengthening the system of universal education in the United States (Petersen, 1993), and thereby supporting an educated citizenry, particularly in rural communities. Peters’ (2010) portraits of faculty civic engagement highlight the contributions of community-engaged scholars to the democratic traditions fostered by higher education institutions and their constituent members. Today, authors of AASCU’s (2002) report, Stepping Forward as Stewards of Place, encourage regional university administrators to embrace their responsibilities as partners in regional development. The growing focus on higher education as an economic engine may distract us from developing a broader understanding of community-university interaction as a catalyst for strengthening participatory democracy.

Methodology

This paper offers a deeper reading of previously collected multi-site case study (Stake, 2006) data from two regional institutions—the University of Central Oklahoma and Lewis-Clark State College (Idaho) -- and the communities they serve where “public engagement” initiatives (AASCU, 2002, p. 5) link a regional campus with the larger community. Using convenience sampling (Patton, 1990), I identified institutions to which I had ready access, “choos[ing] . . . case[s] from which [I felt I could] learn the most” because I could “spend the most time with” them (Stake, 2005, p. 451). Data collection proceeded in a two-phase process. First, to gain an “insider’s view” (Jones, 1970, p. 239), I employed Foster’s (1991) community nomination process, identifying participants (Stake, 2006) on campus and in the community for initial interviews at each site. In these initial interviews, I asked six key informants to nominate the initiatives which they considered the most relevant to the topic (Stake, 2006). In the second phase, through snowball sampling, I identified and interviewed 48 additional participants who spoke specifically to the successes and challenges encountered in the interaction between communities and the universities they serve.

Midway through the second stage of data collection, I received approval from the Washington State University Institutional Review Board to modify the study protocol by requesting permission from all participants to identify explicitly their institution in future publications. Previously interviewed participants were contacted and completed a revised consent form. Most agreed to be identified by name; those who did not are quoted here as a “community member” or “representative of the college/university.” The collected data represented multiple perspectives on the initiatives: interviews with 54 residents, civic leaders, university faculty and administrators, elected officials, leaders from non-profit organizations and businesses; documents and other artifacts (Stake, 2005, 2006), and a research journal (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). (See Table 1.)

Specific engagement initiatives served as entry points for studying the interactions of university and community through a critical geographic lens (Harvey, 1993; LeFebvre, 1991). Therefore, I used narrative inquiry methods associated with organizational studies (Czarniawska, 2007) to collect the stories and portraiture (Lightfoot & Hoffman-Davis, 1997), together with writing as inquiry (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), to analyze the data and to represent the narrative of engagement between community and two regional universities as narrative portraits (Lightfoot & Hoffman-Davis, 1997) of each of the two cases. The individual participants, institutions, and municipalities have been given pseudonyms in this paper; the historical, social, and cultural descriptions are masked, but remain true to the lived experience of these regions to emphasize the role of geographic place (Creswell, 2004) in community-university interaction.

To construct the portraits, I created what Czarniawska (2007) refers to as “emplotted” narratives, or “a set of events or actions put chronologically together [with]…a logical…connection” (p. 387) to one another. Data gathered through interviews, observations, and document analysis provided fibers for weaving institutional portraits (Lightfoot & Hoffman-Davis, 1997). Data analysis occurred in three stages, unfolding in a nonlinear fashion. I first worked with the data using a postmodern constant comparison method (Shinew & Jones, 2005) similar to Maxwell’s (2005) connecting strategies: Reading, marking themes, topics, and common experiences as they appeared and re-appeared, and considering the possible connections among themes. Then I identified the most widely reported perspectives. I also noted the tales that stood counter to more prominent stories. Once I had what seemed a fairly clear picture of the case, I wrote an emplotted narrative (Flyvbjerg,
Table 1. Interview Guides (in sequential order of usage in the research)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Guide</th>
<th>Non-Advancing Initiative/Withdrawing Partner Interview Guide</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am studying the interaction between Lewis-Clark State College/University of Central Oklahoma and the larger community, so I want to learn about the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley/the Greater Oklahoma City Metropolitan Area from your perspective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>When I ask you about “community,” what does that mean to you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I haven’t lived here very long/in a long time. Tell me a story about this community that will help me understand the place where you live.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I also want to learn more about specific initiatives that are linking the university with the larger community. I want to know more about initiatives both that have been successful and those that have met challenges and perhaps failed. I would appreciate your help in identifying projects and people I should speak with.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Tell me about initiatives that you consider to be particularly successful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Tell me about ideas for engagement that have met with significant obstacles, and/or have not been able to go forward.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I’m also interested to speak with partners who may have been involved with projects linking the university and the community who are no longer participating in those efforts. I would appreciate your help in identifying some of these folks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Tell me about people who may have previously been involved in partnerships but are no longer working on these efforts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thank you for your assistance with this research project. I look forward to continuing our conversation during my visit to Lewiston-Clarkston Valley/the Greater Oklahoma City Metropolitan Area later this fall.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Informational Interview Guide</th>
<th>Non-Advancing Initiative/Withdrawing Partner Interview Guide</th>
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<tr>
<td>I am studying the interaction between Lewis-Clark State College/University of Central Oklahoma and the larger community, so I want to learn about the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley/the Greater Oklahoma City Metropolitan Area from your perspective.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. When I ask you about “community,” what does that mean to you?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. I haven’t lived here very long/in a long time. Tell me a story about this community that will help me understand the place where you live.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Tell me about your role in the community.</td>
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<td>4. I’d like to know more about the place where you work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Tell me about your vision for this community. What is important to you about the place where you live?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. What else do I need to know to understand this community and your role in it?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Tell me a story about a time when you were involved with something that included people from the community who worked at the university, as well as people from other sectors of the community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. I’m interested to know about challenges that have come up in initiatives linking the community and the university. Based on the experience you just shared with me, tell me about the obstacles you see in making these relationships work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. What else do I need to know to understand your experiences with frustrating or failed initiatives?</td>
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<tr>
<th>Nominated Initiative Interview Guide</th>
<th>Non-Advancing Initiative/Withdrawing Partner Interview Guide</th>
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<tr>
<td>I am studying the interaction between Lewis-Clark State College/University of Central Oklahoma and the larger community. In our conversation, I want to learn about the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley/the Greater Oklahoma City Metropolitan Area from your perspective.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. When I ask you about “community,” what does that mean to you?</td>
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2001). Multiple voices from across the regional community are heard in each portrait, including my own as witness, as interpreter, and as researcher (Lightfoot & Hoffman-Davis, 1997).

The portraits reveal layers (Rogers, 2007) in the relationship between university and community: Superficial descriptions of the interaction, themes that organize these interactions, and the relationship between the engagement initiatives and the cultural, socio-economic, and historical context within which they occurred. The process reflects Flyvbjerg’s (2001) ideas about phronetic research, revealing the socially and historically conditioned context of the research problem, rather than offering rational grounding to position a study’s results as generalizable, or reducing the implications to a series of best practices.

**Portraits of Engagement**

The University of Central Oklahoma (UCO)
serves the 10-county greater Oklahoma City metropolitan area of 7,891 square miles. Senior leaders at UCO make purposeful efforts to play a key leadership role in the development of the region. As a point of comparison, Lewis-Clark State College (LCSC) has a student body less than one-third the size of UCO and offers no graduate programs. LCSC administrators must constantly juggle the demands of working in a depressed funding environment, while providing both academic and professional technical programs across Idaho’s Region 2 (as defined by state social services programs), the largest geographic region in the state, covering 13,400 square miles of mostly small towns separated in most cases by more than 20 miles. Excerpts from the two portraits provide thick, rich descriptions of the regions, the institutions and, community-university interactions in each region. I focus specifically in this paper on economic development activities discussed by community and university representatives as engagement initiatives. Each excerpt concludes with a specific discussion of the engagement process, identifying key participants and also noting individuals not involved as a foundation for the following discussions of voices, which remain silent in these narratives of engagement.

**Lewis-Clark State College**

Fifteen years ago, residents in the foothills of the Bitterroot Mountains of North Idaho had snow in their front yards until mid-April. During the frosty gray days of winter, they held onto the hope of what one native told me before I moved there in the winter of 1997: “You’ll love the spring. Colors are so vivid here.” Indeed, in May and June, colors which might exist only in Crayola’s collection of 108 crayons appear in the rivers, on the rolling hills of peas, lentils, wheat, and rapeseed, and in the trees between Pierce and Orofino. Hayashi (2007) describes Idaho as “a pretty place to play” (p. 31). For others, the area evokes stronger words: Josephy describes Idaho as “a pretty place to play” (p. 31). For others, the area evokes stronger words: Josephy (2007) calls the place “rugged and inspiring beauty” (p. 2). Lewiston, the largest urban area in the region, lies at the confluence of two rivers, in the mouth of Hell’s Canyon, made famous in the 1970s by Evil Knievil and a motorcycle jump. Today, locals and tourists alike think of the Snake and the Clearwater rivers as a destination for fishing and white water rafting. Nearly 70,000 people live in this area, referred to as “The Valley” by citizens across the region. LCSC, located in Lewiston, serves five counties by state mandate and two counties in neighboring Washington by tradition and affinity.

Life in this region is uncertain. Residents recognize the need to become a different place, and yet resist the changes required to craft a new identity for the region. Timber-related jobs have long been the staple, particularly in rural communities across the Valley, and the downturn in the timber industry has left the economy severely depressed. More and more, beginning with Dene Thomas’ presidency in 2000, LCSC thinks of itself as simultaneously an educational institution and economic development resource. In 2007, Thomas told me,

*(The Lewiston Chamber of Commerce gave LCSC the Large Business Employer of the Year Award. Now not many places would think of us as an employer. They do. I appreciate that because we are. We contribute to the economy of “The Valley,” and I am so incredibly grateful for that recognition because that says that [the college] being here means a great deal to the community.)*

Beyond its economic impact, the college prides itself on its flexibility to meet workforce development, human resource, and management training needs.

Six years ago, the successful engagement initiative most frequently mentioned by everyone in the region positioned the college as both educational institution and economic development resource (Dubb & Howard, 2007). Three outreach centers—then located in Grangeville, Kooskia, and Orofino—provided access to educational opportunities for residents, most of whom were seeking skills or credentials for employment. The outreach center coordinators are described by their supervisor as liaisons in the community and extensions of the college, able to answer questions about financial aid, admissions, and registrar functions. There is an unspoken assumption: The larger role of the centers is to reach out to a broader base of potential students and connect them to the educational opportunities of the regional college.

Each outreach center offers a combination of academic coursework, computer classes, and continuing education programming, for example, nuns from the Monastery of Saint Gertrudes, a Benedictine convent in nearby Cottonwood on beewax candlemaking in Grangeville. The centers and their staff reflect the outreach model commonly associated with university extension and the land-grant universities. Scholars have differentiated engagement from outreach by pointing out the one-way nature of the outreach from university expert
to community (Ward, 2003). Users of the centers’ services do factor into the decision-making about course offerings to the extent that community demographics and previous participation figures indicate the most popular offerings, which are in turn offered more frequently. The logistics of offering credit-bearing coursework in an off-campus location do, however, mitigate availability of complete degree programs, which would be very popular at some of the outreach centers.

University of Central Oklahoma

During the state of Oklahoma’s recent Centennial Celebration, Shirley Jones reprised her role as “Laurie” in the musical “Oklahoma”, singing about a bright future as the original settlers saw it 100 years earlier. Through evocative lyrics, she reminded audiences of big dreams and high hopes. While she sang, elected officials and local leaders celebrated the state’s emergence as a very popular destination for new business.

After 20 years of recession following the oil booms of the 1970s, many in the Greater Oklahoma City area focused on economic growth to rebuild their community. Impressive rejuvenation projects contributed to new business development, to the success of established companies based in the city, and to an improved quality of life for residents of the metropolitan area (Lackmeyer & Money, 2006). Fully explaining the new era in Oklahoma City requires an examination of a major municipal initiative of the 1990s. Debt-free construction of pedestrian walking trails, parks, bridges, a new minor league baseball stadium, a 20,000-seat event center, and the Chesapeake Boathouse, a riversports facility, have been made possible by private investments and public funding through a temporary one-percent sales tax earmarked for Metropolitan Area Projects (MAPS). In the eyes of local leaders, the resulting transformations fueled Oklahoma City’s emergence as a “major league city” (Lackmeyer & Money, 2006). The picture painted by economic development and municipal officials in 2007 suggested dynamic growth, and exciting opportunities in a strong economy capitalizing on the educated workforce and the metropolitan area’s central location at the intersection of three major interstate highways.

Oklahoma City may be best described as recreating itself through these initiatives. The transformation is not complete, however, and there are many opportunities for higher education to play a key role in moving toward the more prosperous future. Against this backdrop, the University of Central Oklahoma (UCO), located in the affluent Oklahoma City suburb of Edmond, actively repositioned itself as a metropolitan university, described by the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities as “striving for national excellence while contributing to the economic development, social health, and cultural vitality of the urban or metropolitan centers served” (http://www.cumuonline.org). The university has also consciously positioned itself as an economic development engine in the Greater Oklahoma City area. The most visible, and frequently cited, example of community-university interaction is the partnership to locate the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation’s (OSBI) Forensic Science Center directly across the street from the UCO campus. The new facility came about through a state-local-university partnership initiated by UCO in discussion with law enforcement officials in 2000. The project simultaneously creates economic opportunities for the city, meets the state’s criminal investigation needs, and provides unprecedented access for UCO students and academic programs. Edmond economic development officials estimated the initial economic impact of this project at $44 million (Baldwin, 2008). The new building represents a very promising economic development initiative for the city/region and provides space for training and other programming to be developed in conjunction with UCO’s Forensic Science Institute.

The UCO/OSBI partnership in particular involved senior university administrators, Edmond’s city manager and other senior officials in pertinent organizations. Shortly after taking office, UCO Executive Vice President Steve Kreidler reached out to Edmond City Manager Larry Stevens to establish a new practice of bi-monthly information-sharing meetings between university and city officials. Both men mentioned these regular gatherings as an important conduit for collaborative work, such as the extension of water lines to new residence halls constructed at UCO in the early 2000s.

In my efforts to learn more about the experiences of Edmondites who did not benefit directly from these initiatives, and who did not have the same story of economic prosperity to tell, I had many conversations with participants who I experienced as racially, educationally, and socio-economically very similar to my white, well-educated, middle-class origins. One such conversation with a community leader was particularly telling: I asked who might have a story
to tell different than his. He did not give me the names of individual people. Instead, he responded with directions for a driving tour of low-income housing developments, and contact information for social service organizations. I subsequently visited one of these organizations, where I met administrators who appeared to be just like me, with similar demographic characteristics and access to social and cultural capital. In the end, I learned very little about community-university interaction in the Greater Oklahoma City region from residents of economically disadvantaged neighborhoods and communities of color. Their voices—like their counterparts in the Pacific Northwest—remain silent in this study.

Silent Voices

By juxtaposing these two portraits, I hope to highlight the heterogeneity of these community-university interactions. Place—the geographic, cultural, social, and historic context—matters a great deal (Harvey, 1993; Helfenbein, 2006) when considering how and with whom a university partners in any type of community development activity. The portraits are, however, incomplete in the sense that typically under-represented racial and socio-economic groups are under-represented in the narrative of engagement at both institutions.

The dominant story of the Greater Oklahoma City area during the data collection phase of this project was one of civic renewal and vigorous community economic development. In that way, Oklahoma City was not all too different from many metropolitan areas in the United States experiencing rebirth before the economic downturn of 2008 (Camp, 1978; Jacobs, 2007; Kaiser, 1980; Neuffer, 1992; Silverman, 2006; Wynter, 1982). Steve Kreidler of UCO referred to Oklahoma City as no longer “the little brother of Kansas City.” In Gotham’s (2001) review of Kansas City’s urban renewal history since 1950, a former assistant city manager recalled how “urban renewal became the synonym for ‘black removal’ and it broke the back of the black stable neighborhood” (p. 304). A similar transformation took place in Oklahoma City’s historic Deep Deuce neighborhood with the building of a crosstown expressway in the late 1980s. This pattern of displacement also happened around UCO on a smaller scale during the mid-1960s, as described by campus historians:

The asphalt that we walk on today was once a community of modest homes with hardwood floors and mature fruit trees in manicured yards. As we tell the story of [UCO]’s growth and celebrate it, we must also pause and reflect on those who left the security and familiarity of home for the greater purpose of higher education (Loughlin & Burke, 2007, p. 110).

Like those who lost their homes in northeast Oklahoma City and central Edmond in the 1950s and 1960s, many people are being left out of the story of dynamic growth in metropolitan Oklahoma City today.

Business leaders in Idaho’s Region 2 were also focused on regional economic development, and President Thomas of LCSC clearly saw the college’s role as key to these efforts. Regional thinking can efface the presence of indigenous peoples as unique members of the community with a unique perspective on engagement. The portrait of LCSC suffers from the conspicuous absence of stories from members of the Nez Perce tribe, the region’s indigenous/first peoples, in the organizational saga (Clark, 1972) of Lewis-Clark State College and north-central Idaho. This gap points to political and cultural competencies, as well as institutional policies regarding human subjects research approval, a process to be negotiated by university and community members interested in working with tribal people. These findings support Pasque’s (2010) argument that women and people of color, in particular, are frequently silenced in the national conversation about higher education for the public good (Kezar, Chambers, & Burkhardt, 2005). In Oklahoma City and the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley, when community-university engagement initiatives focus too narrowly on economic development goals, project leaders sometimes (inadvertently) neglect democratic participation and mutual interests, thereby limiting opportunities for input from traditionally under-represented groups in the community.

Current focus on engagement as process for community economic development does not adequately address the continued disenfranchisement of particular demographic groups within the larger society. Pasque (2010) points out that the current discourse pays insufficient attention to “inequality across social identity (i.e., race, gender, nationality, class) and does not adequately highlight the inequalities in U.S. society” (p. 12). Scholar-practitioners interested in community engagement must
attend not only to the outcomes of the interactions (the focus on economic development), but also to the process of the engagement.

The Promise of Engagement for Fostering Democratic Practice

Bridger and Alter (2006) differentiate between development of community and development in the community. They articulate development of community as synonymous with Flora and Flora’s (1993) idea of building entrepreneurial social infrastructure (ESI), or the “interactive aspect of [community-level] organizations or institutions” (p. 49). ESI, “a specific configuration of [community] social capital” (Emery & Flora, 2006, p. 21), together with individual leadership, provides a necessary “pre-requisite” to support the instrumental activities such as job creation and workforce development referred to by Bridger and Alter as “development in communities” (see also Flora, Sharp, Flora, & Newlon, 1997). Job creation is an increasingly welcome outcome of community-university interaction at a regional level. President Thomas demonstrated this in her emphasis on the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley Chamber of Commerce’s recognition of the college as one of the major employers in the region. The prominence of the UCO partnership with the state law enforcement agency also speaks to a new role for colleges and universities in regional development. The problem is, however, as Bridger and Alter (2006) argue:

an exclusive emphasis on economic development or other activities designed to enhance material well-being does not necessarily lead to improvements in individual and social well-being. Growth, for instance, while it can bring needed material resources, can also increase inequality and divisiveness [and in doing so, suppress] the interaction [among citizens] upon which community depends (p. 171).

Increasingly—because of the current economic climate (Dubb & Howard, 2007) and trends in state funding for higher education (Weerts & Ronca, 2006)—engagement initiatives prioritize economic development goals, as in the partnership to relocate the OSBI Forensic Science Center to Edmond and LCSC’s embracing of its role as a major employer in the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley. However, these economic motives for engagement need not be seen as replacing a focus on the public good, or a commitment to community well-being. Rather, the way to look at this is to differentiate the nature from the process of these relationships. The relationships themselves are about community economic development; the way in which the relationships are established and sustained should prioritize broad, inclusive participation in what Boyte (2010) refers to as “politics” (p. xvi) at the local and/or regional level.

Engagement and the Development of Communities

Repositioning individual higher education institutions as members of the communities they serve is not—as with the roles played by LCSC and UCO in the portraits presented here—at odds with the rhetoric of higher education for the public good (Kezar, Chambers & Burkhardt, 2005), even if or especially when the public good is synonymous with economic well-being. Tinkler (2010) has called for greater intentionality in the use of engagement as a tool for advancing social justice aims, suggesting community-based participatory research as an appropriate methodological tradition for faculty committed to the development of communities. Boyte (2005, 2010) emphasizes the need for all university actors—faculty/researchers as well as administrators and professional staff—to embrace engagement initiatives as important public work, to reject the “experts know best” attitudes characteristic of some university outreach, and to acknowledge “the agency of everyone else” (p. xvii), so they can better learn to “work with people of diverse backgrounds and interests on the basis of equality and respect” (p. xv). Similarly, I am calling here for a deeper consideration of the inherent, but largely unrealized, capacity of community-university engagement initiatives and community-based research and teaching (Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker, & Donahue, 2003) to strengthen participatory democracy. This call has implications for the practice of community-university partnerships, and also highlights methodological considerations for designing and carrying out further (community-engaged) research with the potential to inform pedagogical approaches as well as administrative practice (St. John, 2009).

Building mutually beneficial engagement initiatives as emphasized in the literature (AASCU, 2002; Driscoll, 2008) first requires a
deep understanding of both the university and the community, reflecting intentional relationship building with the broadest possible representation of the community involved. A community leader in Edmond, in critiquing University of Central Oklahoma’s engagement with city residents, inadvertantly offered a plan that would increase interaction between university leaders and a broad cross-section of a community. First, he suggested, the university and the city should identify liaisons to work directly with one another. Beyond this, he called for a monthly face-to-face gathering, “probably…a breakfast or a lunch and have the university talk about what they’re doing and then have the city talk about what they’re doing, and then they can each disseminate information.” The absence of these clearly defined structures for interaction, he argued, limits the degree to which the university is truly responsive to community issues. He dismissed the bi-monthly meetings now happening between UCO administrators and city officials as an example of institutionalized interaction, not real engagement: (The city manager’s not the soul of the city. They’re just the worker bees. And some of these [administrators], they have no soul. They’re just…a mechanic, you know. And so the souls aren’t really meeting, are they? [Edmund community leader]

When all interested parties—beyond the people labeled by another community member as the “STPs,” (same ten people)—are involved, the resulting initiatives stand a better chance of being mutually beneficial.

**Directions for Future Research**

Civic engagement grounded in a commitment to participatory democracy and social justice also has implications for the research related to community-university interactions. To date scholars have examined partnerships as examples of a university’s civic responsibility, challenges to the research imperative, opportunities for training for students as future citizens through civic engagement and service learning, organizational innovations, and collaborative enterprises. We must also consider the methods being used in the empirical study of community-university partnerships and explore the possibilities presented by other methodologies.

Tinkler (2010) calls for an approach aimed at advancing social justice outcomes; such a model is necessary at this juncture, she argues, because: existing realities point to the need for significant changes in our society. …If we want to expand democratic participation to include those individuals who have been excluded because of lack of economic and social capital, we need to push for…a radical model of research. (Tinkler, 2010, p. 16–17)

Several avenues exist to achieve this end. As Tinkler has suggested, critical theory, with its emphasis on power—who has power? how is that power being used? to what end?—may offer important tools to advance this search for more democratic research methods for, and thereby the more democratic practice of, community-university interaction in regional contexts. Placing (Helfenbein, 2006) engagement in its geographic, historical, cultural, and socio-economic context—as this study does—offers another possible route to holding outcomes and processes of community-university interaction as equally important in the further development of scholarship and practice in this area.

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) traditions also offer methodological tools for keeping questions of how and to what end in dynamic tension during the research process. In Lewiston, I met a man who is a lifelong resident of the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley with a family history of community involvement spanning several generations. He is himself actively involved in civic activities; he expressed to me his frustration that LCSC has not been very involved historically in “community improvement projects.” His solution: the college should require each faculty member to get involved in the community. If this aligned with their research interest, that would be even better, he said. In the context of school funding, a faculty member in political science might help district leaders better understand voter behavior in bond elections, as a foundation for examining the outcomes of a present bond election, when very low voter turnout negatively affected (in his view) the outcome. He was unaware of the degree to which this might violate an individual faculty member’s academic freedom; he may have, nonetheless, identified a wonderful opportunity for a CBPR project for an interested faculty member. As we continue to think about more consistently emphasizing both process and outcome, these are
the sorts of ideas and initiatives that may hold the most promise in the future. To be clear, they are not a panacea for democratic outcomes, given the almost inherent misalignment of the academic researcher’s training as an expert and the community organizing work that is necessarily a part of CBPR partnerships (Stoecker, 1999; Sorensen & Lawson, 2011).

Higher education administrators must also “think in actionable ways” (E.P. St. John, personal communication, July 20, 2011), investigating problems of practice by collecting data while engaged in their professional responsibilities to study new initiatives as they are implemented. By conceptualizing the findings and conclusions of research as “actionable knowledge” (St. John, 2009, p. 75), action inquiry holds great potential for the continuous improvement of any system. St. John’s approach taps into the strengths of the broader action research tradition, but it also suggests a research team limited to university actors. Civic scholar/activist Harry Boyte (2010) calls on university administrators and faculty to “help change the meritocratic culture of American society, which devalues the talents and intelligence of the great majority of people” (p. xv). Nyden and Percy (2010) address this issue as it pertains to research design by “adding seats to the research table” (p. 313) to directly involve constituents in all elements of the design process. This team model expands what Boyte (2010) refers to as the “agency of everyone” (p. xvi).

In a new era of increased accountability and decreased state funding for higher education, regional colleges and universities like the University of Central Oklahoma and Lewis-Clark State College are developing entrepreneurial activities to generate revenue, many of which reflect enlightened self-interest over traditional commitments to serving the public good (Boyer, 1996; Kezar et al., 2005). The portraits of engagement presented here suggest great benefit may also be realized by developing practices that link both the process and the intended outcomes of community-university engagement with discussions of what is necessary to sustain a participatory democracy.

References


Plenaries Set Tone for NOSC 2012

NOSC 2012 at The University of Alabama, September 30–October 3, featured three well received plenary sessions, one of which, the opening plenary, also included the conference’s keynote address.

They were as follows:

- **Monday, October 1, 2012, 2–3:30 p.m.,** Presidential Panel on Engaged Scholarship, moderated by UA Graduate School Dean David Francko. Panelists were Dr. Guy Bailey, president, The University of Alabama; Dr. William Muse, Kettering Foundation, former president, Auburn University; Dr. Lee T. Todd, Jr., former president, University of Kentucky; and Dr. David Wilson, president, Morgan State University.

  **Keynote Address:** Ambassador James A. Joseph, Duke University. Title: “The Civic Engagement Imperative: Higher Education and the Public Good.”

- **Tuesday, October 2, 2012, 7:30–8:30 p.m.,** Stephen Black, director, UA Center for Ethics and Social Responsibility. Title: “The Future of Morality: What Role Should Colleges and Universities Play?”

- **Wednesday, October 3, 2012, 8–9:30,** Dr. Kevin Kecskes, associate professor of public administration, Portland State University; and Dr. Kevin Foster, associate professor, University of Texas at Austin. Title: “Fits and Starts: Visions for the Community Engaged University.”
Keynote Address—The Civic Engagement Imperative: Higher Education and the Public Good

Ambassador James A. Joseph

Dean Francko

I’d like to welcome to the podium Felecia Jones, director of the Black Belt Community Foundation, who will introduce our keynote speaker.

Ms. Felecia Jones

Good afternoon. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said that not everybody can be famous but everybody can be great because greatness is determined by service. If you would, journey with me through the life of Ambassador James A. Joseph. The ambassador is emeritus professor of the practice of public policy and leader in residence for the Hart Leadership Program at the Sanford School of Public Policy at Duke University. He is also founder of the United States Southern Africa Center for Leadership and Public Values at Duke and the University of Cape Town. He joined the Duke faculty in 2000 after a distinguished career in government, business, education, and organized philanthropy. He was appointed to senior executive or advisory positions by four U.S. presidents, including Under Secretary of the Interior by President Jimmy Carter and U.S. Ambassador to South Africa by President William Clinton.

In 1999 the Republic of South Africa awarded Ambassador Joseph the Order of Good Hope, the highest honor bestowed on a citizen of another country. In 2008 he was honored as a Louisiana Legend and inducted into the Louisiana Political Hall of Fame. The founding chair of the Commission on National and Community Service that established AmeriCorps, he was honored by the U.S. Peace Corps in 2010 for his lifetime contributions to voluntarism and civil society. From 1982–1995, Dr. Joseph was president and chief executive officer of the Council on Foundations, an international organization of almost 2,000 foundations and corporate giving programs.

After graduating from Yale Divinity School in 1963, Ambassador Joseph began his career at Stillman College in Tuscaloosa, where he was founding co-chair of the local civil rights movement. A frequent speaker to academic, civic, and religious audiences, he is the author of three books. He is the recipient of 19 honorary degrees and his undergraduate alma mater, Southern University, has named an endowed chair in his honor. He has also served as chair of the Children’s Defense Fund and as a member of the board of directors of the Brookings Institution, the National Endowment for Democracy, the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, and City Year South Africa, a youth voluntary service and leadership development program. One thing that was not included in what he sent me and was shared during our time together, which I’ve been most fortunate to have with him, is that he was chair of the Faculty Board for the Duke University Center for Civic Engagement.

I cannot leave out the fact that the Ambassador is married to the former Mary Braxton, who is an Emmy Award winning television journalist, and he has two children and two grandchildren. I hope that after hearing him speak today you will agree with me that he’s great, because he definitely has served. Join me in welcoming Ambassador James A. Joseph.

AMBASSADOR JOSEPH

Let me say at the outset what a delight it is to return to Tuscaloosa. I have not been back since 1964, a year after three local ministers and I launched the Tuscaloosa Citizens Action Committee. Those were difficult and those were dangerous times, but the movement we organized not only desegregated this community, but also opened the door for many of the advances that followed. And I say that because we could not have done it without the students at Stillman. So when I think about civic engagement, higher education, and the public good almost fifty years later, I think of those students; and when I think of those times, and today’s theme, I am reminded of the ancient historian Tacitus, who defined patriotism as praiseworthy competition with one’s ancestors. I recall that definition of civic virtue today because it reminds us that each generation has an opportunity, indeed an obligation, to contribute something as significant and even as extraordinary as the generations that preceded them. And so...
the questions I would like to examine today are these: One, what role should higher educational institutions play in developing, nurturing, and sustaining the civic values that lead to civic engagement? Secondly, what do these institutions need to know and teach about the modern idea of civil society, especially the civic habits and traditions of the many population groups who are changing our civic culture? And three, what can these institutions do to help define and develop civic engagement as a strategic form of social change rather than simply a form of charitable relief?

What I am suggesting is that there should be three components to what we teach, what we research, and how we promote or facilitate civic engagement. The first has to do with civic values, the second has to do with civic knowledge, and the third has to do with civic habits. This encapsulates civic engagement into three powerful metaphors: being, knowing, and doing.

Civic Values
Let me begin with the being, or values, component and offer the observation that an institution is what it rewards. I have been in business. I’ve been in government. I’ve run a lot of organizations. And one of the things I learned is that an institution is not so much what it says in its value statement or what it says in its press releases. It is what it rewards its people for being. If civic engagement is an important university priority, there needs to be both guidelines and incentives that reflect what the university considers to be its values, what it claims as its values. It is not enough to simply provide incentives for students through service-learning; there must be incentives to unleash the research capacity of the university as well. I was here and heard what the presidents panel said, and I am so pleased that they represent institutions that “get it.” But as I travel around the country, I find an institutional culture that seems to regard practical investigation into practical community needs, as Dr. Wilson said, as the “dumbing down” of research. Too many of our faculty colleagues tend to regard those who teach about civil society and those who call for civic engagement, in Robert Louis Stevenson’s phrase, as “practitioners of an obscure art.”

Universities That “Get It”
I am pleased, as I said, that there are universities that “get it.” They are the ones that understand that one of the missions of universities is to put knowledge at the service of society. But one of the things I’ve learned over the years is that the best universities are also those that put the community at the service of knowledge. There are an increasing number of universities that have actually tied academic incentives to community outreach. They are the ones who understand that in order to unleash the full potential of the university, the institution will have to re-think what it rewards.

The second point I want to make about civic values is that we need to be very clear about what values we need to cultivate. I taught ethics at a number of universities and for too long those who teach ethics have focused on the private virtues that build character to the exclusion of the public values that build community. It may be that what we need most at this unique and almost apocalyptic global moment is to help both our students and our society understand how best to think about, and how best to apply, values to public life without getting caught up in the politics of virtue or the parochialism of dogma.

I have been living in South Africa full or part time for the last sixteen years and there is much we can learn from a concept of community the South Africans call ubuntu. It is best expressed by the Xhosi proverb, “People are people through other people.” It is this powerful sense of the shared interdependence of people that lies behind the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation reflected in the work of Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu. It is the ability to say that your pain is my pain that has allowed them to say that if your humanity is assaulted, my humanity is assaulted; if your dignity is denied, my dignity is denied. It is not “I think, therefore, I am.” It is “I am human because I belong. I participate; I share because I am made for community.” At the heart of this spirit of ubuntu is the willingness to take risks and to act justly and with compassion to one another.

So what does it mean to speak of values that build community in a world that is integrating and fragmenting at the same time? The more interdependent we become the more people are turning inward to smaller communities of meaning and memory. While some find reasons for despair, it may be that remembering and regrouping are part of the first stage of the search for common ground. As I travel around the world, I hear more and more people saying that until there is respect for their primary community of identity they will find it difficult to embrace the larger community in which they function. We will thus find it difficult to form a more perfect union in the United States.
as long as we emphasize the myth of individualism to the exclusion of the tradition of community that saw people come together to build each other's barns and to ensure that there was a public safety net for those in some way disadvantaged.

The second principle in which our idea of community needs to be grounded is one I often quote from the African-American mystic, poet, and theologian Howard Thurman, who was a mentor to Martin Luther King at Boston University. Dr. Thurman was fond of saying, "I want to be me without making it difficult for you to be you." Can you imagine how different our world would be if more Americans were able to say "I want to be an American without making it difficult for Arabs to be Arabs, Asians to be Asians, and Africans to be Africans?" Can you imagine how different our communities would be if more Christians were able to say, "I want to be a Christian without making it difficult for a Jew to be a Jew, a Muslim to be a Muslim, or a Buddhist to be a Buddhist?"

So how do we build community? It is has been my experience that when neighbors help neighbors, and even when strangers help strangers, both those who help and those who are helped are transformed. They experience a new sense of connectedness. Getting involved in the needs of the neighbor provides a new perspective, a new way of seeing ourselves, a new understanding of the purpose of the human journey. When that which was "their" problem becomes "our" problem, the transaction transforms a mere association into a relationship that has the potential for new communities of meaning and belonging.

In other words, getting people to do something for someone else—what John Winthrop called making the condition of others our own—is the most powerful force I know in building community. When you experience the problems of the poor or troubled, when you help someone find meaning in a museum or creative expression in a painting, when you help to dispel prejudices or fight bigotry directed at a neighbor, you are far more likely to find common ground, and you are far likely to find that in serving others you discover the genesis of community. So the moral imperative of civic engagement is to help transform the laissez-faire notion of live and let live into the principle of live and help live.

Civic Knowledge

This brings us, then, to the second question we need to ask. It is about civic knowledge: What should we know and what should we teach about the modern idea of civil society? Resurrected in the 1970s by the Polish Workers Movement and later in debates about perestroika in the former Soviet Union, the idea of civil society is rooted in three very different visions of public life.

The first was the idea of civil society as government. Civility, for Aristotle, described the requirements of citizenship rather than private sensibilities or good manners. It was organized around the face-to-face relationships of friends whose leisurely aristocratic benevolence enabled them to discover, articulate, and promote the public good. The second was the idea of civil society transforming government, often in opposition to government. I was standing on the edge of a crowd in the former Soviet Union when an upstart named Boris Yeltsen made his first speech calling for major social reform. I was standing in a crowd outside of Parliament in Cape Town when Prime Minister de Klerk announced that Nelson Mandela would be released from prison and the African National Congress unbanned. On each occasion, people spoke of the rebellion of civil society against the state. They did not so much want to replace the state as they wanted to transform it. The third idea of civil society has been the notion of civil society transcending government. Unlike the private sector driven by the market and the public sector driven by the ballot, the so-called third sector is driven by something deeper and more noble, a spirit of compassion and commitment to the common good. It is in many ways the conscience of the other two sectors. It is even possible to argue that since civil society preceded government, it may be more appropriate to think of it as the first sector.

The attractiveness of the concept of civil society lies in its conjoining of private and public good. But in what should be its finest hour, the idea of civil society is in danger of being distorted and hijacked by those who emphasize its potential in order to bolster arguments for a more limited social role by government. Some of the strongest advocates of civic engagement are people with an uncivil state of mind.

While it is clear that it was people power that led to the collapse of communism, the dismantling of apartheid, and even the fall of the Berlin Wall, there are now those who exaggerate the potential of civil society in order to bolster their claims about the role of government. Those of us, and I spent fourteen years as a spokesperson for Benelovent Wealth, who understandingly and necessarily emphasize the potential of civil society have a responsibility to also point to its limits. It
is also important to remember that civil society includes more than simply the non-governmental organizations that serve a public good. As Thomas Carothers reminded us in a *Foreign Policy* magazine article, civil society everywhere is a bewildering array of the good, the bad, and the bizarre. The hate groups that have used the Internet to become transnational and the criminals who operate across national borders are only a few of the groups that use the civic space between the state and the market for less than noble purposes. In short, civil society carries the potential to re-shape and unite a divided world, but we must guard against overselling its strength or over-romanticizing its intentions.

Another of my concerns about civic knowledge, what we know and what we teach and what we research about civil society and civic values, has to do with the many ways in which American civic culture is changing. Alexis de Tocqueville, Robert Bellow, and many others have painted wonderful pictures of what they described as the habits of the heart of the American people. Unfortunately, neither de Tocqueville nor Bellow included in their reporting and analysis the extent to which voluntary activity and civil society in racial minority communities served as a vehicle of self-help, social cohesion, and positive group identity. As president of the Council on Foundations, 2,000 foundations from around the world, I cringed every time I heard some new guru on civil society speak of American voluntarism or American generosity as if it were somehow unique to those citizens who traced their ancestry to Europe. Very disappointed in what I kept hearing, I began the research on the civic traditions of America’s racial minorities for *The Charitable Impulse*, which I published in 1995. What I found were remarkable manifestations of civic feeling that in many instances pre-dated, but was consistent with, the civic habits practiced and the civic values affirmed by the larger society.

**Emulate the Iroquois**

As early as 1598, and long before Cesar Chavez started organizing farm workers, Latinos in the Southwest formed “mutualistas” and lay brotherhoods to assist members with their basic needs. Long before de Tocqueville, Benjamin Franklin became so enamored of the political and civic culture of the Native Americans he met in Pennsylvania that he advised delegates to the Albany Congress in 1754 to emulate the civic habits of the Iroquois.

Long before Martin Luther King wrote his “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” or gave his “I Have a Dream” speech, African-Americans in the 19th century formed so many voluntary groups and mutual aid societies that some Southern states enacted laws banning black voluntary or charitable activity. Long before Robert Putnam published his first article on social capital, Neo-Confucians in the Chinese community were teaching their children that a community without benevolence invites its own destruction. The point I am making is that it is no longer possible to speak of American civic culture without reference to and respect for the varied traditions that are now shaping our civic life.

We have also seen the globalization of civic engagement. People around the world are coming to realize that a good society depends as much on the goodness of individuals as it does on the soundness of government and the fairness of laws. They are reclaiming responsibility for their lives through neighborhood associations in squatter settlements, farming cooperatives in rural areas, micro-enterprises in urban areas, housing associations, mutual aid associations, and various other forms of self-help groups to improve local conditions.

The events of the last decade have caused us to think often and deeply about whether transnational community is really possible. I am convinced that it is, but it will require us to think and act differently. Our students who are engaged in community outreach locally and those who work abroad must be taught to respect local traditions, local cultures, and even local concepts of community. While not as well organized and not as well supported abroad as in the United States, the idea of helping neighbors in need, the idea of service to others as an essential part of the pursuit of happiness, can be found in many countries and communities. The absence of a service movement does not necessarily mean the absence of a service ethic. What we can bring is experience in how to mobilize and even how to motivate, how to communicate an existing ethic, and how to coordinate existing energy. But there is much we can learn about the service ethic that comes out of the notion of ubuntu, for example.

**Civic Habits**

We come now to my final concern, what I have called civic habits, the idea that we tend to promote a rather limited approach to civic engagement. We are told with frequency that the world would be better off if more of us worked in
soup kitchens, delivered meals to the elderly poor, or tutored kids who are at risk. Those are very important contributions, but they are ameliorating consequences when the university could also help eliminate causes.

The most often cited example of charitable relief is the story of the Good Samaritan. We are told that a traveler finds someone badly beaten along the side of the road and stops to help. Suppose that same man traveled the same road every day for a week and each day he found someone badly beaten at the same spot on the road. Compassion requires that he give aid, but eventually compassion requires that he ask, “Who has responsibility for policing this road?” What started out as an individual act of charitable aid leads to a concern with public policy. The first response was to ameliorate consequences, but the second response must necessarily be aimed at eliminating causes. One is charity, the other is strategic civic engagement. Civil society has often been most effective when it has dared to go beyond charity, when it has helped provide both understanding and meaning to the social problems that trouble us.

My second point about civic habits is that the university can help to inform and enrich the public policy process. I know that many of your institutions are advised by its donors and legal counsel that it is unwise, illegal, or too risky to get involved in public policy, but I’ve served over the years on the boards of many universities, so I know about which I speak. But I also served on the U.S. Treasury Department’s Task Force that struggled with how to distinguish between permissible advocacy and impermissible lobbying and I can tell you that there is much that can be done by a university to objectively inform and objectively influence policy.

And finally, a third point about civic habits is that civic engagement should mean investing in the empowerment of those who are economically and socially marginalized. The university can help educate its publics, both locally and nationally, on the policies and practices needed to make our society work for all of its citizens, but it is not enough to be simply advocates who speak in behalf of the marginalized groups in our communities. We must help empower them to speak for themselves. If racism was the original American sin, the persistence of paternalism is its most enduring counterpart. One of the most striking and fundamental lessons coming from around the world is that when we empower the historically excluded to be active participants in the programs designed for their advancement, we are likely to have not only new ideas and wider ownership of strategies, but increased effectiveness as well. Moreover, it is much better to empower communities than to simply provide service or engage in advocacy in their behalf.

We have all too often asked the wrong question in dealing with those in our communities whom we seek to help. We have been asking what can we do about their predicament, or what can we do for them, when we should have been asking what can we do together. Self-help is a principle all groups admire and often desire, but too many people assume it means that those disadvantaged by condition or color should be able to lift themselves by their own bootstraps, even when they have no boots. I like the concept of assisted self-reliance or participatory empowerment, where the affected groups provide leadership but they are supported by outside resources.

Let me, thus, conclude by making the point that if you are to involve your students and your faculty meaningfully in your communities, they must understand that how they are engaged is as important as in what they are engaged. There is a story told about the exit of the British from one of its former colonies. On the day in which colonial officials were preparing to depart, the Governor General was overheard to say, “When we came here these people had few roads, few hospitals, and few schools. We built new roads, we built new hospitals, and we built new schools, but now they ask us to go. Why?” A peasant, on overhearing the conversation, interrupted to say, “It is easy to understand, your honor. Every time you look at us you have the wrong look in your eyes.” Civic engagement aimed at eliminating poverty or advancing equity must begin first with a look at the policies and practices of our own institutions. Unless you have the right look in your eyes, your efforts will not only be in vain, if left unattended could damage the institution’s image, diminish its influence, and defer the dreams of those who gave birth to the vision you seek to advance.

And so we need to step back and ask what assumptions, what social analysis lies behind civic engagement, what theory of change informs our practices and priorities, how often is the promotion of equity a consideration in what we conclude is successful, and finally do we have an organized and disciplined way of learning what truly works in closing social gaps. When we provide answers to those questions, we may find that civic
engagement itself may need to change. We cannot allow ourselves to become advocates of an obscure art, preoccupied with the potential of civil society and not its limits. Someone has to ask the difficult questions that too easily go unasked, and if asked unanswered. I hope that you will be the one to return to your institutions and ask those difficult questions. Someone has to probe beyond the conventional wisdom that avoids controversy by closing rather than opening minds. You are part of a moment in history where an increasing number of universities have chosen to put knowledge at the service of society.

I hope, therefore, that you will be able to elevate the idea of civic engagement to both a craft and a calling, both a discipline of study and a field of practice.

Archimedes is reported to have said, “Give me a lever long enough and I can move the world.” Those of you in this room have been given the lever. I hope you will use it not only to move your institutions and your communities, but also to move the world. You are engaged in a very noble enterprise. For when you provide help, you also provide hope. And the gift of hope is as big a gift as the gift of life itself.

Thank you very much.
University Presidents See Growing Role for Scholarship of Engagement

Guy Bailey, William V. Muse, Lee T. Todd, and David Wilson, moderated by David A. Francko, Dean of the UA Graduate School

Introduction

Constituting the Presidents’ Panel were Dr. Guy Bailey, President of the University of Alabama; Dr. William V. Muse, former president of Auburn University; Dr. Lee T. Todd, Jr., former president of the University of Kentucky; and Dr. David Wilson, president of Morgan State University.

Dr. Bailey

It’s a great pleasure to have you here. I am in my fourth week on the job, but this is not my first sojourn in Tuscaloosa. I came here 40 years ago as an undergraduate and left here after six years – I like to point out to students that I got two degrees during that time – never knowing that I would come back in the role I’m in today. It is truly an honor. It’s also an honor and a privilege for us to host this conference. This is the largest gathering in the world of engaged scholarship faculty, staff, students and community partners.

We are particularly happy to host this conference for a couple of reasons. It’s the first time a non-land-grant institution has hosted it. And if that doesn’t tell you where engaged scholarship has come, nothing will. We think of engaged scholarship and community outreach as part of a land-grant university’s mission. I was chancellor of [an urban university] and we saw that as part of our mission. But for a traditional university like the University of Alabama to see that as part of our mission tells you how far the field has come. We are also happy to partner with Auburn University in doing this. Most people think that Auburn and Alabama don’t do much in common. I have to tell you it’s not true. I have a daughter who has three degrees from that school, so they have a lot of my money. They have been great to work with. If you wonder about the relationship between the two institutions and the fact that friendships run deeper than battles over football, you simply remember what happened after the tornado last year. As many of you know, Tuscaloosa was devastated by a tornado. When the call for student participation in helping to clean up and rescue people came out, our students were there. Auburn students came as well. It was gratifying to see Auburn students and our students working together. If you ever want to see the meaning of student engagement, that’s it. Anyone who wasn’t committed to outreach and engagement before this incident certainly is now.

I think it is particularly appropriate for us to host the conference here in Tuscaloosa. I am looking forward to hearing the presentations. And I want to offer some special thanks to the people who’ve made this conference possible. Dr. Hiram Fitzgerald from Michigan State University, president of the Engagement Scholarship Consortium board, and the entire ESC board, would you raise your hand? Thank all of you very much (applause). And Dr. Carolyn Dahl, dean of the College of Continuing Studies, and her staff for their extensive work in planning and implementation, and Dr. Samory Pruitt, vice president of Community Affairs, who keeps me focused on the issue even when my mind tends to wander somewhere else. And thanks to all listed in the conference program. The weather is going to clear up and you are going to enjoy beautiful October days in Alabama. Again, it’s a delight to have you here.

Dean Francko

We anticipate a lively discussion with our presidents. We might begin the conversation by asking our presidents two simple questions, which are not all that simple. Why do your respective campuses see engaged scholarship as an important part of their mission? How does your respective campus support engaged scholarship and what are the challenges to such support?

Dr. Muse

I had the opportunity to serve as president or chancellor of three universities over a period of about 20 years. For 15 years prior to that I worked in academic administration. So my comments will be focused on a composite of all of those experiences in terms of engaged scholarship. But I have to tell you my philosophy about engaged scholarship was shaped much earlier.

As a young boy, I became captivated by the sport of baseball. I read every book I could find about how to play the game. But I learned very
quickly that in order to play the game I had to venture onto the field, and that is where the real learning took place, in practice, and this shaped my educational philosophy. As a student I found that I learned as much, or more, from my out-of-class experiences than I did from inside the classroom. So as a faculty member later — my field was business administration — I used in-class exercises like the case method and assigned projects in order to help students implement or learn more about what they had been taught. As a business school dean I established internships for students, brought practitioners from the business world into the classroom to teach, and established one of the first small business centers in the nation.

As president I encouraged all academic programs, with admittedly mixed success, to provide opportunities for their students to apply what they had learned. I'm very proud of one of the examples, the Rural Studio, implemented by the School of Architecture at Auburn in the Black Belt of Alabama, and you will have an opportunity to visit that as part of this program. I came to conclude that there are three very distinct stages to the learning process. I call them my Triple A’s: acquisition, assessment and application. Our traditional focus has been on the acquisition stage, where we help students acquire knowledge they need to know through lecture, demonstration and other methods. This is usually done by an individual professor who is responsible for the second phase of assessment, determining to what extent the student has gained an understanding of what is important.

The third stage, that of application, which is central to certain disciplines like medicine, but in too many disciplines is what we get to if we have time. The world of higher education is changing rapidly. I believe that these changes will bring engaged scholarship and the application stage to the forefront. And I will say more about that in our discussion.

Dean Francko
Thank you.

Dr. Wilson
Bill, thank you for your remarks. I would like to come at this a little differently. I actually assumed the presidency [at Morgan State] because of my career in outreach scholarship and engagement. I want to give you some sense of how that happened. I had a traditional tenure in higher education until I got to Rutgers-Camden in roughly 1988. When I arrived at Rutgers-Camden, it was one of the more challenging urban areas in the United States. As I walked the campus, it was truly an enclave. There was an understanding that Rutgers was in Camden but not of Camden. They saw this tremendous disconnect. The provost and I had a conversation that the institution would not only be in Camden but could also be of Camden, and could also extend its tentacles into south Jersey and bring about needed change.

It was at that point that I began to understand the transformation that could occur when an institution looked beyond its boundaries and beyond itself and began to challenge the faculty and others to begin to think about their scholarship in ways that would actually bring about that transformation. And while having the time of my life at Rutgers-Camden, my telephone rang and, of course, it was the gentleman to my right, Bill Muse, who was president at Auburn and who had come to Auburn with the same kind of perspective in terms of the role of an institution that I had been a part of at Rutgers-Camden. Bill convinced me he was also about extending the tentacles of Auburn across this state, particularly in the Alabama Black Belt, and to work with faculty who, if they followed along, their research and their scholarship would count in the tenure and promotion process. For a very long period of time, seven years to be exact, we worked assiduously with the faculty, with the Senate, with others at the university to bring about a reform of the tenure and promotion process at Auburn to reflect the fact that if faculty actually engaged in this research and applied it, they would be promoted in the tenure and promotion process. With that kind of backdrop, let me just say a word or two about what I do now and then I’ll bring this to a close.

I am the president at Morgan State University in Baltimore, and for those of you who don’t know much about Morgan State, we are an institution of roughly 8,200 students. We have a number of “firsts” associated with us. We are No. 1 in the United States in producing African American electrical engineers. We are No. 3 in the United States in producing African American engineers overall. By the way, North Carolina A&T is No. 1, Georgia Tech No. 2, and we are No. 3. We are No. 3 in the United States in producing African American doctoral recipients, Howard University being No. 1, the University of Michigan No. 2, and we’re No. 3. When I came on board, the institution, much like Rutgers-Camden, found itself having paid a whole lot of attention to producing those
graduates to lead the nation in innovation, but had not paid a lot of attention to how the institution could transform the area where the institution is located, in northeast Baltimore, and that area too was beset with a number of challenges.

So for an entire year we engaged in a strategic planning process to think about how this research institution, as it continues to grow and mature, would not just do things for the sake of becoming just another research institution. How could we do it with applied scholarship in mind? We have introduced at Morgan what we are calling the “Morgan Community Mile.” We have drawn a circle around the campus extending a mile in all directions and that’s going to be our focal point for the next 10 years. We are now conducting an extensive analysis of everything within that mile: unemployment, nature of small businesses, educational attainment. We are looking at innovation, the amount of crime. And we are bringing those results back to our faculty and saying, if you join us in bringing about reform in northeast Baltimore, with Morgan as the anchor institution, when you are up for tenure and promotion, it is going to count, and you can come back at any point in your life and look at what your work has led to in terms of the difference in the lives of the people that it has made. I have much more to say about that, but I will stop there.

Dr. Todd

I’m eager to hear that. I’ll give a personal story about why I thought engagement was important. I had been in business about 18 years when I started the presidency at UK. My wife and I are native Kentuckians from rural Kentucky. We started first grade together and cared about the state. I made a comment when I interviewed that I did not want to be the president of a university, I wanted to be the president of this university, partly because I thought that the University of Kentucky could change Kentucky, and it needed it. Later in my first year I came up with a term I called “Kentucky Uglies.” It just hit me one day when I was attending a health conference and I looked at the statistics and I said, “This is ugly. If we don’t face up to it. If we don’t count this stuff. If we don’t measure this stuff, we’re never going to solve it.”

We did a bus tour the next year to talk about our research challenges. I looked through a book the other night and there must have been 100 headlines about that trip, and all of them had “Kentucky Uglies” in the headline. It at least drew attention to the things that were holding us back. We are leaders in lung cancer, heart conditions, poor oral health, and so forth. When I took the job, it appeared to me the university was already acting like it was a big research university, stiffening the K-12 system and not doing much, not working within the shadows of our dormitories on any of the problems that were eating at our city, with the gap between them and the students in our population. I made the comment that we needed a higher purpose. We’d been challenged by the governor to be a top 20 public research university. And we could do that. Let’s just hire a bunch of scientists and engineers and let’s go after the federal grants. Let’s forget about Arts and Sciences, the Arts and some of these other colleges and we can be a top 20 measurably by 2020. But we would have failed the state of Kentucky. We needed to change Kentucky. I’d like to see our best minds working on our toughest problems. That attitude, and I think you hear it from these two presidents — it helps when it comes from the President’s Office, it makes people at least listen. It’s unfortunate, but that’s the way it works. I realized that we were a land-grant university. We had an ag-extension network that had done a tremendous job. I call them our trusted ambassadors. Everybody knew them. They were out there and they were doing agricultural and family nutrition very well, but I thought they were undervalued for what they could do. We had a conference for all the ag agents my first year and I asked six of our deans, from business and engineering, health care and so forth, to speak to that group of agents about how they could use their network for research in their fields.

After that, the six deans lined up at the table, and the biggest line was behind the Fine Arts dean. The rural ag agents were saying, “We need arts in our communities.” And I am proud to say we have probably the only fine arts ag agents in the country. Right now I think we have four, and the counties pay for them. I told the agents, you can be a conduit for us. You don’t have to understand everything we do, but you have to know how to make contact on behalf of a need in your community. Once I got talking about it, several people popped up and wanted to do something. And then I figured out we ought to put this together, because I can’t handle it. Presidents have about that much time [small space between thumb and forefinger] to spend on anything. Many of you know Phil Greasley. Phil is doing well. As many of you know, he’s had a health problem. I put him as associate vice president of engagement. We defined what we called the Commonwealth Collaboratives.
I told the faculty to send me a proposal about some problem that Kentucky has where you feel that your research can have an impact. I’m only going to give you $10,000 for in-state travel and part of a graduate student. Find something you can measure — that’s my engineering and business background — so we can see whether we’re making progress or not. We got 47 proposals in that effort. Phil oversaw those. I’ll get into the assessment of all those in just a few minutes. They took on problems like pre-term births, which is 18% in my home county, and they got it down to 4%. They took on methamphetamine training for police forces. They took on tobacco-free communities to try to rid a tobacco-generating state of some of the lung cancer issues that we’ve had. They took on real problems.

Pragmatically, there were two things that drove me. One, I thought it made sense and that people would want to do it; two, we needed to be covering the state politically, because all the regional universities were vying for cash just like we were, and if we were the University of Lexington, that didn’t make much sense. Even the ag network we had was a bit discounted because “that’s extension, that’s not really UK,” it’d be here anyway. And so we now have stories to tell all the politicians when we go to their local counties about things we have done in their region using our research and using their people. It was an effort to try to get some of the faculty not engaged anymore in research reengaged, to take on something that they felt in their heart and soul they would like to be involved in. That has worked to some extent as well, but I just think it was the right thing to do, not only for a land-grant university but as you have already heard, for any university to get out and use our knowledge to solve problems that inflict our people.

Dr. Bailey

I would just add one thing to that. I think as a president, because the public is one of your constituents, you see issues out there. You see problems. Pretty soon you begin to realize, as all of these gentlemen said, that you have human capital resources in your university that can help deal with those. Couple of mentions here about the Alabama Black Belt. I grew up in the Alabama Black Belt, so I am well aware of the issues there. Coming back to the University, you know what those problems are. The issues are in your state and you realize that you have talent, you have talented resources. You may not have all the money in the world, but you have a lot of brainpower that you can bring to bear on problems, things that other people can’t. Once you see that it becomes your responsibility. It’s easier to see in some places than others. When I was at Missouri-Kansas City, we straddled the line between what was the historically African American community and the white community in Kansas City. We understood that we needed good relationships with both groups for us to be successful. It was real apparent from our physical location the kind of things we needed to do.

Now we sit at the northern and western edge of the Black Belt and Auburn, of course, at the eastern part. You understand that while the state has made much progress, that part of the state has not made that progress. You understand that as a citizen of that area, you owe the area something. I think all of these gentlemen will understand there are faculty members waiting to be asked and waiting to be engaged. So you see that as your responsibility going forward.

Dean Francko

Gentlemen, you touched on two really important points, as I was listening to what you said. First of all, universities playing a central role in the region in which they are located. It can be a mile away from campus. It might be the whole state, but having a vested interest in improving things that are going on in the environs of the university. You also talked about outreach and getting involved with folks outside the university to make significant changes. But as we know one of the significant things in engagement scholarship is moving from the concept of outreach to the concept of engagement, where you are actually partnering with folks in the community and they are active agents with faculty, staff and students to effect those changes. Do you have any tips on how best to accomplish that? I think some of you touched on that. And secondly, you touched on the notion of making this work count among faculty and students, that it counts for promotion, that it counts for tenure, that it counts in evaluation. Any tips on how you have done that as your respective institutions moved to engagement and developed a culture of rigor?

Dr. Wilson

I have relied upon a strategy that I developed at Auburn. We went all over the state and had statewide conversations. We invited into those conversations various constituents. We asked two or three basic questions: What are some of the
challenges you are facing in this region of the state? Are there programs coming from the institution that perhaps have been in place for 20-25 years that are not working to meet those challenges? What is it we can take back to the institution in order to excite our faculty about working with you to identify the challenges you have raised? That strategy worked very, very well for us when I was at Auburn to produce this sense of engagement, not just the sense that we are the university, we know it all, you are the community, you know nothing, so to speak, and therefore we are coming to treat you. Engagement is just the opposite. You have a series of challenges that the community understands as well as, if not better than, the university. The university has certain kinds of expertise. So how do you bring those two things together and make them work for the betterment of all?

I used the same strategy when I was chancellor of the University of Wisconsin Extension and the University of Wisconsin Colleges. We went all over that state engaging all constituents in the same kind of way. At the end of the day the constituents felt that their voices were heard. Whatever came about as a result of that conversation in terms of a strategic plan it was with them in mind. The faculty felt that they had a part to play in that. So that worked very well there. Then at Morgan I do something a little bit different. I actually have community walks. I walk the neighborhoods at 4 o’clock in the afternoon, 6 o’clock at night. I have residents gather in their homes and we have coffee and tea and we talk about what the challenges are on this block, what are the challenges in a three- or four-block area. I take faculty members with me so they can hear those things directly. When I got to Morgan, the neighborhoods didn’t trust the university at all because they had seen the university develop. The construction projects were enormous, $500 million in construction. They are seeing all of these wonderful buildings go up but nothing in terms of how they are seeing the world. I recognized that, so now we have the great support of all those neighborhood associations. The faculty who are part of those walks, who are part of those conversations, they understand as well how to work with the communities in order to promote the kind of reform that I spoke about earlier.

**Dr. Todd**

I want to take up on one thing that President Bailey said. You actually had faculty out there who want to do this and think about it and had contacts. When I got in office, I said I’m going to take the lid off the place. Get out there and find something that you want to do in the community and let’s see what it looks like.

It was enough that we had to form the vice provost’s office. After we let the lid off, if some of them don’t jump, we’ll have to figure out what to do with them. But we had a lot of jumpers. The other piece was that we ended up putting up a website where you could go to any county in Kentucky, click on your county and it would show how many engagement contacts we had in that county and the telephone number for each one of those contacts. They would either call Phil Greasley’s office and get somebody if they didn’t know anybody, or they could call the project director. We did write a lot of community proposals with areas. They don’t know how to submit proposals, how to do budgets — some of them do better than others. In the eight years we had this going we put in $470,000 — $10,000 a year for 47 of these collaboratives. They brought in $51 million in funding.

We tracked it every year. So when you get to promotion and tenure, there is a real concern. When I sent the first request for proposals out, I only sent it to tenured professors because I didn’t want to capture some poor assistant professor doing something that was really great, I thought, but the committee didn’t think so. Some of the assistants got involved anyway and have done very well. We did put through a process of following the Michigan State model of trying to measure engagement, to make it a quantifiable plan. Part of that was the map, part of that was counting the grants and getting the statistics. We have moving through the Faculty Senate a promotion and tenure policy now, but I haven’t tracked it in the last year. I retired a year ago, so I’ve been traveling. I hope it gets through. It had a lot of momentum when we left. People realize we are making some significant progress.

The last thing I would mention is about giving people access. We started a network called the University of Kentucky Advocacy Network where we chose people throughout the state, many of them not alumni of UK but they were leaders in their community and they wanted attached to the university in some way. We would call that group together to campus once a year to tell them what we were looking for, especially in terms of the Legislature. We would have a meeting of that group in our state capital the day before the first legislative day and pump them up in the morning,
have them have all of their individual legislators to come over for lunch. We had a really good turnout. We would always let a couple of students speak and they would win them over pretty quickly.

That Advocacy Network heard about the types of stories we had. Stories are powerful. We were on our trip and this hospital director stood up and said, “Your health care group came down and trained our local physicians how to deal with stroke. We had a 35-year-old have a stroke last week. Thanks to that training she was treated and back to work within two weeks.” The Advocacy Network did help us get the word out. Then they could point to that map and that map would help them find a contact point. So that’s one of the ways we did it.”

Dr. Muse
My experience has been that for significant engagement to take place on the part of faculty two conditions have to exist. First, there has to be the opportunity for engagement, and second, it has to count. When I went to Auburn, a land-grant university, Auburn had a well-developed system through cooperative extension of connecting to local communities. But unfortunately it was limited to agriculture and related disciplines. In almost every case there was very little student involvement in that as well. I was very fortunate, as David indicated earlier, in attracting him to come to Auburn. He was the first vice president for outreach the university had. He worked very diligently in creating those opportunities, opportunities for disciplines throughout the university, not just agriculture, to engage communities all over the state. It was a tough battle but we got engagement to count.

At many universities, particularly those that are research oriented, left to their own preferences, faculty would count only articles published in refereed journals. We cannot afford to do that as universities today. We could not afford to do it many years ago. We’ve got to develop that constituency, if we are to have the kind of work that is done by faculty when they engage communities and help them understand what they know about problems they’re dealing with. When they engage their own students in helping to solve that problem, they create tremendous support for the university that is very important, particularly in terms of attracting state funding. You have to have leadership from the top. You have to create the opportunity and you have to make sure it counts.

Dr. Bailey
Just two quick things. I want to emphasize what President Wilson said. I think you can’t overemphasize listening to community members. They have insights you can’t get any other way. As presidents, it’s our inclination to talk, but the truth is that’s the situation where we need to be listeners lot more than talkers. I think the strategies he mentioned there are really right on the money. Same thing is true with tenure and promotion guidelines. My previous university, Texas Tech, just revised those, and Valerie Paton [vice president for planning and assessment] can tell you in great detail about the struggles and successes of doing that. You do have a constituency among your faculty who are committed to this and being able to empower that constituency. And by the way, you also have a significant number of your students who want to be engaged as well, and I think empowering them is really a key thing. At some other point, Valerie can give you all of the details of the recent revisions of the tenure and promotion guidelines.

Dean Francko
Thank you, gentlemen. We have about 10 more minutes yet. I want to give us time to focus on maybe one of the key questions that all of us are interested in. What do you see as the future of engaged scholarship, both within the United States but also internationally, where many of our projects are moving? What do you see are some of the future benefits, challenges, whatever, in the last 10 minutes?

Dr. Muse
I think there are two major changes occurring in our society that are going to bring engaged scholarship to a more central position. The first is that of technological change and the second is economic pressures. The ability today to present information online in an interesting and engaging way is going to move us very rapidly in the first stage of education, the acquisition of knowledge, to the online or video disk stage. I fully believe a major part of that acquisition stage in higher education is going to take place in that manner.

That then pushes the university into a counseling and assessment center mode, a different role for the faculty in assessing whether students have met certain objectives or standards as to what they know. The stage that comes to the forefront very quickly is that of the application stage. You’ve mastered this body of knowledge
we say is important. We’ve made an assessment. We are convinced you know that. Now can you apply it? Can you apply it in the laboratory? Can you apply it in the field? I see emerging for almost every discipline the idea of the teaching hospital for the medical school, a lab school for education. Everyone’s got to have that constituency where they are much engaged in helping students understand the discipline that they’ve taught them. A major part of that is not just information that relates to employment or job but in preparing students to be good citizens. That’s a major role for colleges of liberal arts to engage in.

Dr. Todd

I’m going to touch on an area that some don’t think is engagement. It’s economic development and jobs. When I interviewed for [the presidency of UK], one faculty member said I scared her to death because I talked about entrepreneurship and economic development. She said, “I’m in the philosophy department; you could ruin these kids minds.” I said, “Well, we need to have a philosophical conversation about the future of our state. If we don’t change the economy around here, coal, tobacco, whiskey and horses aren’t going to be our savior. We track economic development, and it is a form of engagement. You have to inform potential investors out there to put money up to start companies and to hire your graduates. You have to involve the lawyers, CPAs, the professional community, who’ll help those people found their company. You also have to let the lid off of your faculty, to let them know it’s OK to be involved. We got a first-year dean when I was teaching at UK. I had started a company with these patents I had. He called me to the office, and asked me “How can you be a professor and have a company?” I said, “If I was still at MIT and I didn’t have a company I’d be called into the office and asked ‘Why don’t you have a company?’ So I’ll leave if I have to” and the next year I did.

But I let the lid off when I got back [as president]. We track start-up companies at UK now and we have 80 in the Lexington area now that brought in $67 million worth of outside venture capital last year. That’s an indication that they’ve got something people will invest in, because there’s not a lot of venture capital in Kentucky. You talk about international, we’re going to have to let these kids know they’re going to be working internationally. They’re going to have to take more foreign language and learn more about other cultures than in the past. I think higher education is the solution to that, and we have to work with the industries that are out there. That’s a form of engagement I think is going to become more and more important.

Dr. Wilson

I’ll just piggy-back on that. I think we have come a long way in 25 years in terms of outreach and engagement. I like to think about how we had the support of our presidents in driving reform on our campuses. I think we were trying to convince faculty, particularly the faculty in the discovery camp, that we were not dumbing-down the university as we promoted the scholarship of application. I think we have come a long way in 25 years, so much so that for me personally it’s very hard for me to take seriously a major research university today that does not have outreach and engagement at the forefront of its agenda [audience applause]. I realize I might very well not be speaking for the entire chancellorial or presidential group in this commentary, but it just seems to me that we’ve come so far in two and a half decades that we are not having the same conversation today. I think the future of outreach/engagement is pretty much centered in two camps. One camp may be somewhat of an unlikely camp. This is the way I would characterize it.

What we are seeing in this country right now is a shifting of the population. We are seeing a huge demographic shift in the country. We are seeing the largest growth in the population occurring in the minority sector –particularly the African American and Latino population. Those populations are the least well-represented populations in college degree attainment. Outreach and engagement is going to be absolutely critical to ensure those pockets of the population, that are the fastest growing pockets that are not as well prepared to enter colleges and universities, are well prepared.

As Lee and Bill and President Bailey have indicated, I don’t think the country is going to be competitive long term [unless] the major research universities make a different kind of argument about outreach and engagement. We really do need to get out there and connect with these communities and connect with those populations. If we don’t, then who is going to be on our campuses in 15-20 years? So it’s almost self-serving on the one hand, but it’s also about national competitiveness on the other. The second camp is what I see as a dwindling of state support of public universities. Increasingly as I go to Annapolis to argue for support for my institution
and others, we hear, “What are you doing for the state of Maryland? What are you doing for the city of Baltimore? What are you doing for my district?” It has to go beyond simply enrolling students from that area. They are looking for real concrete things that you are doing to tackle some of the intractable problems in the state and the district and the city. If you cannot make a convincing case, that money is going to go to transportation, it’s going to go to corrections, it’s going to go to those other areas at the table making a more convincing argument. For public universities, in light of dwindling state support, it’s in our best interest to sharpen that argument and make sure that our universities are indeed anchor institutions in our state, in our cities, and our regions.

**Dr. Bailey**

I couldn’t agree with your more. I think that point is really well taken. Increasingly our states expect us to be anchors of economic development and solvers of community problems, and those two things aren’t unrelated. If you think about it, much of economic development requires a highly educated workforce, it requires areas with health care, it requires a lot of the things that we as institutions can either deliver or spur.

When I was in Kansas City several years ago as chancellor of Missouri-Kansas City, one of the interesting things I found was that the Kauffman Foundation, a large local foundation, supported two broad initiatives, one was entrepreneurship, and there was a real focus on developing new companies, developing startups, and teaching entrepreneurship as part of a college of business. They also supported K-12 education and STEM disciplines, especially in districts with large numbers of under-represented kids. When you saw those at first you might think they were unrelated, but they really are not. You are not going to get much of the first without the second. The Kauffman Foundation understood that these two things go hand in hand.

One of the most important things we will do in becoming anchors for economic development is help with the education of our workforce and outreach in that way. Increasingly, as President Wilson said, it’s not just our obligation, it’s what’s expected of us. It’s not just what we expect of ourselves or what we want to do, but what the states expect for us. So to be successful I think we have to develop good strategies for meeting those expectations.

**Dean Francko**

Thank you. Well, I don’t know about anybody else but I’d like to keep talking. Unfortunately, we’ve run out of time for this part of the plenary. Could we give our panel a round of applause? Thank you. Thank you very much.

**Editor’s Note**

On October 31, 2012, after two months on the job as the 37th president of the University, President Bailey announced his resignation, citing the illness of his wife. The next day, the Board of Trustees appointed long-time University of Alabama Executive Vice President and Provost Judy Bonner as president, the first woman to hold that position. Dr. Bailey, a respected sociolinguist, will remain as a member of the faculty in the English Department.
The Future of Morality: What Role Should Colleges and Universities Play?

Stephen F. Black

Dr. Carolyn Dahl, Dean, College of Continuing Studies

Good morning. Thank you for being here so bright and early. Some of you in this room have a crazy idea. That is that students can change the world. In fact, most of you may have this idea. Many of you have invested your personal and professional energies in this notion. You get up every morning determined to make it happen, to make progress toward this crazy preposterous idea.

Stephen Foster Black, our keynote speaker this morning, shares this idea with you. Stephen Black is the personification of engaged learning, of that powerful idea that learners, scholars, and communities armed with a shared purpose can and do change the world. What an honor for us to spend the morning with him.

Stephen Black is the grandson of United States Supreme Court Justice Hugo L. Black. He grew up in New Mexico after most of his family left our state in the 1950s and ’60s following his grandfather’s controversial role in civil rights decisions, including Brown v. Board of Education. Despite growing up over 1,000 miles from here, from a very early age Stephen has always been connected to Alabama through the legacy of his family’s commitment to public service. Stephen Black received his bachelor’s degree from the University of Pennsylvania, where he graduated magna cum laude, and his juris doctor from Yale Law School. Following graduation from law school, he returned to Alabama to join the Birmingham law firm of Maynard, Cooper & Gale. After three years with that firm, he was called to public service, serving briefly as assistant to the governor of Alabama, focusing on policy and economic development.

During his experience in the governor’s office, Stephen was struck by the enthusiasm of the thousands of students he encountered when speaking around the state. Stephen then came to the University of Alabama and convinced the president and provost to create the Center for Ethics and Social Responsibility and a related statewide organization, Impact Alabama, also housed at the center.

Through the work of the center, students are supported in developing a personal definition of moral and civic maturity. The center is dedicated to making the values and skills of citizenship a hallmark of a University of Alabama education through authentic experiences in communities that, as Ambassador James Joseph framed for us yesterday, make the plight of others our own. Impact Alabama is a statewide service-learning effort, unique nationally, a nonprofit staffed by 30 full-time college graduates who have provided more than 3,000 college students with opportunities to participate in structured service-learning projects that promote learning and leadership development.

Since the Ethics Center and Impact Alabama began, students and staff have provided more than 3,600 hours of service to the Tuscaloosa Pre-K initiative. Through Documenting Justice (see Table 1) they have written and produced films focused on subjects of social justice of both state and international significance. They have provided advanced placement in science and math for high school students throughout the state. They have prepared tax returns for more than 17,000 working families, claiming $31 million in refunds and saving approximately $4.7 million in commercial preparation fees. And through FocusFirst (see Table 1) they have provided comprehensive vision care to more than 175,000 children. In 2008, Black received the prestigious Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Community Health Leaders award for his work with FocusFirst. This national award is given annually to individuals who demonstrate creativity and commitment in addressing society’s most pressing health issues. Ten recipients were chosen from among 800 nominations.

The Birmingham News says of Stephen Black: “Black is bright and energetic and he speaks persuasively on such broad issues as tax, constitution and education reform. Black exhibits a new spirit of leadership that Alabama desperately needs.” What I predict you will say about Stephen Black is “Wow! Amen!” Dear colleagues, it’s my great honor to present Stephen Foster Black.

STEPHEN BLACK

Thank you, and what an incredible introduction. That sets the bar too high. Have you been listening to the news about the debates
from the presidential campaigns? They’re so worried about underperforming they’re acting as if they’re going to be lucky to make it through with complete sentences. That’s the way I feel after that introduction.

In the short time I have I’m going to talk fast because I’ve got a lot to say before my time is up. At the risk of saying things we all know, I still think it’s worthwhile to step back and go back to the reason why any of us do work tied to universities relating to communities. With all the talented and educated people in the room, there’s a risk of developing such an expertise and focus on one specific area that every once in a while we need to lift our heads up, step back, breathe deeply and acknowledge again why what we do is so important.

**Reason to Care about Citizenship**

There is a reason for colleges to care about citizenship: They’re entrusted with the lives of young human beings growing into adults with a moral and ethically engaged life in front of them. I don’t think there’s ever been a time when there was a greater call on universities to be thoughtful about their responsibilities. I would argue that we face a bigger challenge right now in regard to the future of ethical and engaged citizenship than at any time in our country’s past.

I want to talk to you about the biggest single challenge confronting ethical progress today. And let me be clear, I’m defining progress in a way that everyone can agree, meaning a non-ideological definition. The idea, as corny as it sounds, a conception from our founders, the idea of an America as a country worth dying for that gives you the right and the liberty and the privilege of caring about your children, working hard, having some sense of commitment to your community, and, based on those ingredients, having a rational expectation that your children will realize a better life than you had and your grandchildren a better life than them. That is what I refer to as the *transcendent trajectory of progress of our nation*. In this incredible experiment in democracy, as messy as it is, the biggest challenge before us is here right now, live and in living color, in a way we’ve never seen before, a bigger threat than terrorism, another banking crisis, bigger than a double-dip recession. Bigger than all that, I think, is *fundamentally what happens to a nation whose citizens year after year become less and less personally engaged with people unlike themselves*. Sort of Robert Putnam moving forward, a whole body of scholarship and concern over what happens in an increasingly competitive world economy where more Americans and all kinds of Americans are working longer than ever before, at least trying to find the hours to work longer than ever before.

**Demographic Changes**

When you couple the phenomenon of fewer and fewer people engaged with others unlike themselves with demographic changes and the reality of a majority suburban nation, the majority of Americans don’t have any sense of the challenges to citizenship that comes with these conditions. Fifteen years ago marked that point for us, the first time in our history that a majority of us lived in the suburbs, which means we have added onto our daily burden, in addition to longer work hours, commuting. The drive goes up. There are some jobs in the suburbs but the majority are not. To realize their understanding of the American dream, more and more Americans are suburbanizing further and further out. Buying a home with a lawn and some trees puts them on the highway more hours every year.

Articles written 15 years ago about Atlanta’s response to the longest average daily commute in the western world referred to it as “the revolt of the commuters”—beautiful loft projects coming up in downtown Atlanta. We’ve got some great ones in Birmingham, too, and there’s some cool loft projects in downtown Tuscaloosa. Beautiful story, but statistically an anomaly.

We continue to be a more suburbanizing nation.

If you lay a demographic track over the highway system of America, you’ll see Americans continuing to segregate themselves in $30,000 to...
$40,000 a year income brackets along the highway systems of America, spending more time in the car, more time at work, and less time engaged in relationships with people, especially those unlike themselves or in relationships aimed at causes and purposes beyond their own family’s immediate needs.

Rotary, Kiwanis, Lion’s clubs, 4-H, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, PTA … those organizations have two things in common: One is they’ve had a dramatic and positive impact across generations in our nation, and two, they’ve all declined dramatically in the last two generations. And you think to yourself: Fewer mothers showing up for their children’s PTA meetings than 30 years ago … do they just not care about whether their kids and their schools thrive? And you have in your head: “No idiot, that’s not it. It’s because they’re working.” And in fact you would be right.

In fact the vast majority of women would love to be at their school’s PTA, but they are working every hour they can find because they want to feed their children. And I think that’s an understandable perspective to have. But it also means fewer of us are engaged in projects beyond our own immediate needs. As I tell college students all over the nation, whether you are Republican or Democrat, the building block, the core of ethical citizenship, the ability to invest your own time and talent to the betterment of a community or society – is compassion.

And not as a sound bite, as an idea that you as a human being develop, or fail to develop, that allows you the gift of seeing the world through someone else’s eyes, of being able to feel what it would be like to lead someone else’s life. Fortunately for us all, it’s human nature to have compassion, if sparked properly by putting people in situations where they’re exposed to others unlike themselves in real-life vulnerable situations where they can gain insight and return to a safe place to reflect, to read about the structural basis for the situation they just witnessed, and you start to see the flames of compassion sparking. Unfortunately, statistically, this is happening for fewer Americans and we see it play out in dramatic ways.

I remember, you all remember, Katrina coming through. I remember the images after the water broke through the levees and rose. Do you remember the images from news helicopters, of hundreds and then thousands over that two-day period holding up signs, “Help,” “Drop Food,” “Need Water”? The semester after that I took a sociology of religion course at Emory. The professor brought in a survey, a three-night national phone survey. It was fascinating to read. Perspectives on all sorts of issues. We’re turning through this thing, and we get to a page where one of the questions said, “Did these images sadden you?” And one of the students across from me, an African-American Ph.D. student, noticed the breakdown of answers by race. And the black column was 99 percent, which in my mind I think the 1 percent didn’t hear the question right. Of course they were saddened at the images, at least 99% of African Americans were. But only 54 percent of white Americans were.

Next question, “Did these images anger you?” Answer: 99 percent of African Americans were angered but only 52% of white Americans were. There was an awkward silence in the room at this point, and the professor throws the paper down, crosses her arms, and says, “Do you see? This is a racist, cold country.” And I remember thinking, “Yeah, there are racists walking around, but I don’t think it’s the 48 percent in that poll. I think that’s something different.” I raised my hand, reluctantly, and started explaining, and the professor added more and we decided to do more research over the next week and come back. Partly from more structured focus group research in the following week, it became clear what was being measured in that initial poll. It turned out that as a considerable majority of white, educated, middle- and upper-income God-fearing Americans saw that scenario unfold, many of them, if they were being honest, had this in mind: “Of course I feel bad for those people. I don’t want to see anyone get hurt. I don’t want to see anyone die. But let’s be honest: I saw that damn storm rolling through the Gulf of Mexico four days earlier. My cousins drove to Birmingham. I have friends in New Orleans. They were in Dallas two days before the storm came in. I feel bad for those people, but they could have taken a little bit more personal responsibility, planned ahead, and driven out of town.”

Now will someone tell me the factual problem here? It turns out that millions of Americans, the majority of them working at least 40 hours a week, don’t have cars. And I remember walking out of that class thinking: “That’s so fundamentally a failure of college. If we can’t have our students leave with a higher education degree in a state like Alabama, where, at that point they’re better educated than 90 percent of the state, without a basic factual awareness of what it is to live like the majority of Americans live, which right now is paycheck to paycheck with negative savings, higher
credit card debt than ever before, and for millions of Americans, without a car.”

Those images came to my mind a couple weeks ago with a recent popularized – not just from a presidential candidate – conception of a lazy 47% who don’t pay taxes. And it becomes easy for anyone who pays taxes to dismiss them and not have to consider any of the details or the life circumstances, because it certainly is easier to think: “These people don’t care, they don’t pay. They don’t take responsibility for themselves.” It’s a little bit more shocking when it’s a candidate for the president of the United States. Whether you are a Republican or Democrat, whether you go back to Reagan or either of the Bushes or President Clinton, we can all acknowledge that 20 percent of that 47% are seniors on fixed income who have been paying into the system their entire lives, and 60 percent of the remaining are working as many hours as they can find, most of them full time, receiving their earned income tax credit, which President Reagan doubled, because, until three months ago, there was bipartisan consensus across the nation that a morally responsible nation supports low-income families based on their willingness to work.

**Immmoral to Leave College Ignorant of How the Majority Live**

The bare facts of the life lived by the majority of Americans are something that it is immoral to leave out of a higher education. And it’s not enough to lecture about it. I can speak to 600 college students and put on the chalkboard every category that America is one, two or three in the industrialized world, and it’s a bunch of categories. We are in a blessed nation: self-made millionaires, self-made billionaires, copyrights, patents, women’s access to higher education, women’s access to entrepreneurial ownership opportunities. What a beautifully free, productive, wealthy, advanced nation we are. But also on that list we must include the infant mortality rate, which in the last three years has put us 28th. The state you’re in right now has a between 20 and 25 percent functionally illiterate adult population.

I say that to students and I know many are thinking to themselves, “Twenty percent illiterate. Gosh, we got a lot of lazy, dumb people around.” And sometimes a hand will go up and someone will say “Twenty percent. I don’t think you’re lying to me, but where are they?” And I feel it’s very important to let them know they’re all around you, that they’re seeing one a day at least. There are a lot of complicated nuances about growing up to be an adult in America and sometimes graduating from public school functionally illiterate. But I assure you for the vast majority of them, laziness isn’t anywhere in the building, and most of them have been working every job they can find since they were 15.

Now, community engagement, service-learning, the scholarship of engagement, taking seriously the role of ethical developers by connecting colleges and universities to communities of all different kinds meaningfully and respectfully … . I think that’s beautiful. I want to add one other part to that. I don’t know if any of you have been thinking of celebrating this young generation for being charitable. Regardless of ideology, I think anyone would admit we have problems in our health care system. Most people agree it shouldn’t be OK to have 48 million people without health insurance, the vast majority of families below the middle not receiving primary care and very few children seeing pediatricians at all.

It occurred to me nine years ago that vision care is one aspect of that failure. There’s not a state that any of you are from that comprehensively provides vision care to children before they get to public school. The reason is you can’t find them in very big numbers until they get to public school. And it occurred to me: “Aha, what a beautiful opportunity for service-learning. Let’s see how serious campuses are about committing to changing things in their communities. This is doable, long term.” (see Table 1)

**Screened 4,600 Children**

In the first year I convinced seven beautifully engaged, thoughtful professors to make vision screening part of their course. And I hired two college graduates for $1,000 a month to defer law school to help start this. We got $4,000 cameras to take pictures of children’s eyes and we went to low-income daycare centers and Head Starts and in the first year we screened 4,600 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds in Alabama, and 12 percent of them had an eye problem that no one had diagnosed. We started building a network (see Table 1) of eye care professionals who agreed to see them for free if they didn’t have insurance. Most of them we could enroll in All Kids [a state and federally funded public health program]. That was eight years ago. Last year, with a staff of 30 employees and 20 campuses around the state we screened 33,000 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds at 1,100 low-income daycare centers in all 67 counties of one of the poorest states in America. The entire thing is done
by people under the age of 23. No other state in America has this. And it’s all campus-based and the majority of the students end up in a classroom thinking, “I love what I’ve just done, that’s pretty cool.”

But what are we doing? We need to engage 18-year-old volunteers to provide basic vision care? Why, because it’s the 3-year-old’s fault they don’t have a pediatrician? We literally found 14 kids last year with cataracts in one or both eyes. They’d be permanently blind within two years. But we have, the way you have on your campuses, a generation of 19- and 20-year-olds who will set their alarm for 6 o’clock in the morning, pick up that camera, drive to a rural county to find a daycare center you can’t see on MapQuest, and go into the living room of a trailer where six kids are sitting on the floor to set that camera up to take pictures of their eyes because they believe in their gut those kids deserve health care like any other kid. Now I love that experience for our students.

The Belief They Can’t Learn

There’s another side to the growth of engaged learning and scholarship that’s not just service based. I would argue one of the biggest challenges facing public education in America is the lack of belief by the majority of Americans that low-income children can learn at all at a high level, that at a certain point it becomes irrational, decade after decade, to pour money into something that doesn’t change.

I get that feeling. I’ve heard it from people honestly giving it to me. I promise you the majority of Alabamians don’t see the high-end result everyone is hoping for. And the most angering thing that happens is, in Alabama we have 4.5 million people, and we have 11 torchbearer schools. That’s a high poverty, yet high-performing school. So on the one hand, you think to yourself, “Are you kidding me? There are 4.5 million people in this state and you’re telling me there are only 11 schools in low-income neighborhoods that are doing a good job? That’s a disaster.”

And I would say, “You’re right. That’s a disaster.” But I think it deserves to be seen from the other side as well. There are, after all, 11. There’s E.D. Nixon Elementary School in Montgomery, where 99 percent of the kids are on free or reduced lunches and 85 percent are from single-parent households. Five years ago it was on a state takeover list. Their fourth graders were scoring in the 14th percentile. A new principal was hired, a special woman. There are 32 teachers at E.D. Nixon Elementary School. Anyone who knows anything about Alabama knows we have a strong teacher’s union. It’s hard to fire teachers. Twenty-two of her teachers were replaced within two years. And when people ask how did you do that in Alabama, she says: “I made it so miserable for them to be in my building, most of them left on their own. They didn’t buy my story and they wanted to get out.” I asked her what was her story. “Every child in the building will learn at a high level. It’s our responsibility. If you don’t believe that from every fiber of your being, get out of my building.” And she said, “I used stronger words than that.” She reminded me of Nick Saban.

Literally four years later, her school is acknowledged as a torchbearer school. Her fourth graders’ reading scores are in the 88th percentile, two points higher than the state average, two points higher than Prattville Middle School, a suburban fast-growing area where the schools are filled up with families leaving schools like E.D. Nixon to get a better education.

There’s a school in Mobile, George Hall Elementary School, where they had to raise money two years ago to build a shower because a third of their students don’t have running water every day of the month. Their scores are even higher than those at E.D. Nixon. They’re blowing the roof off the building, and as you can imagine, it’s important to know what’s happening in these schools. These are special principals and incredibly hardworking teachers, and there’s no one silver bullet. I would trade 10 percent of the volunteer hours from students at Alabama to put them on a bus and drive them to some of these schools so their experience with service and engagement and ethics wouldn’t just be about poor kids who are failing, so they would experience structural, prophetic change, and not just because white college students are helping out, but because talented teachers and principals are turning schools around.

That’s what I call Documenting Justice, the side of service-learning that lets you go volunteer, lets you make a difference in a malfunctioning school or a library but also gives you the context to learn about the visionary prophetic moves forward in all realms of policy that are taking place every day, all over the country.

I’m so proud to be in this room. I can’t imagine a higher calling than being involved in this cultural shift in the way universities help young people define their obligations. There has never been a more important time to be part of this conversation. Republican or Democrat or
Libertarian, there is not a monolithic block of 47 percent who don’t care. And it becomes immoral for us, as college-educated Americans, to not make sure young people have personal, visceral, real experiences and relationships to experience human progress across culture and across neighborhood and across class.

### About the Author

Stephen Black is director of the Center for Ethics & Social Responsibility at The University of Alabama.

### Table 1. Center for Ethics and Social: Mission and Representative Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mission: The Center for Ethics &amp; Social Responsibility at The University of Alabama seeks to cultivate a willingness and desire in students to take responsibility for the well-being and progress of the larger community, especially through innovative, curriculum-based service-learning opportunities.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SaveFirst</strong> Nonprofit tax preparation and financial literacy initiative sponsored by CESR and Impact Alabama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of participating campuses ................................................................. 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of participating students ................................................................. 3,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of families helped .............................................................................. 17,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Refunds for tax year 2011 .............................................................................. 31,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tax preparation fees saved .............................................................................. $4,700,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of participating Alabama cities ......................................................... 24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of participating community organizations .......................................... 200</td>
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**SERVICE-LEARNING**

**UA Named to President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll for Third Consecutive Year in 2012**

In 2010-2011, about 20,000 UA students completed 780,000 hours of community service with some 120 community partners.

**INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTING JUSTICE**

Now in its fourth year, this study-abroad film course teaches students to imagine and feel the cultural and social conditions of people outside their own spheres. The course culminates with a public screening of the students’ films.

**FOCUS FIRST**

Student volunteers ensure that lower-income children ages 6 months to 5 years are screened for vision problems. Since 2004, more than 2,300 students from 23 campuses in Alabama have screened more than 175,000 children.

**MORAL FORUM**

Topics in this annual dialogue and debate program focus on values-based controversial issues like organ selling and legal drinking age. After the Tuscaloosa tornado in 2011, Moral Forum

**CollegeFirst Advanced Placement Math and Science Mentoring Program**

Among thousands of applicants, CESR received a $25,000 grant for its math and science advanced placement mentoring program, now in its third year.
Good Morning. So, here we are in Alabama. You’ve all been here a few days. I just got here last night. And I’m again shocked. Eight o’clock in the morning and all of you had all these options and here you are.

Now, I know it was the breakfast that probably pulled you in. But anyway, thank you for coming. Let’s acknowledge the folks here at the University of Alabama for their great work [applause]. Thank you so much. Special thanks go to Dr. [Samory] Pruitt, Dr. Heather Pleasants and Dr. Ed Mullins for organizing us and working with us over the past several months and working together.

I’m now working with a new colleague half way across the country and we’re up to the challenge and we hope you are too. So, we hope you’ll come along with us on a journey today.

Could you give me a show of hands if you are currently associated with the University of Alabama? OK, excellent, a good bit of you.

Something funny happened last night when we were coming in from the airport. The very kind shuttle driver kept very quiet. Kevin and I were just getting to know each other. Finally, I leaned forward and I touched him on his shoulder and said, “Excuse me, Sir. How are you doing?” As he’s driving down the highway, he said, “I’m doing fine. Is there something I can help you with?” I said, “Yes, we’re going to the University of Alabama, right?” And he said, “Yes, Sir. We are.” I said, “You have a football team, right?” Now that poor man almost swerved off the road. So I said to him, “Now you all are doing pretty well this year?” “Yes, Sir. We’re number one. We’re ranked number one in the country,” he said. “Congratulations to you.” And then asked, “Sir, do you know who’s ranked number two in the country? And he said, “Awe, why would I know that?” then he said, “Wait a minute. Wait a minute. It’s the Ducks, the Oregon Ducks.” I said, “That right,” and added “Sir, I’m from Oregon.” And he looked at me; he looked at me again. I thought he was going to stop that van!

I know we have some friends here from Oregon State. I don’t think we have anybody here from the University of Oregon. But I’m from another university in Oregon. Right there in our state’s major city, from Portland State University.

So, I want to acknowledge and congratulate the folks here from Alabama for having such a good football team.

We all know that the only thing that’s more important than football on a college campus is community engagement. And that’s why we’re here, right? That’s right [applause].

All right. So, as Heather said, I am Kevin Kecskes and I’m at Portland State. I’m pleased to be here with you this morning and now I’m going to turn it over to Dr. Kevin Foster.

So to start out, to give you a sense of where we’re going this morning, here’s a little bit of a roadmap. We’re hoping to have some good conversation that takes us from the conceptual to the theoretical, to the practical. As many of us know if we’re reading JCES, if we’re engaged in this work for some period of time, there’s a number of different ways to think about community engagement. For the purposes of our talk, there’s a number of ways to think about and talk about institutional change.

We’re privileging the conceptions and the ideas that we’ve worked on over the years, but also fully acknowledging that there’s a lot of different ways to look at change and to look at engagement. So, we’ll start out with some models of community engagement. We’ll present an idea of a continuum of change that we hope will be useful when you think about working in the context of institutions, working in the context of complex structures, how you begin to be specific and purposeful about moving the needle in terms of creating space for community engagement on your campus or in your social network. We’ll move to some examples.

Dr. Kecskes is senior colleague. So he wins this one. But if it I were my class or if I were preaching in church, there would be no back-row Joes, right? I would tell everybody in the back to move to the front and make it more intimate. But Kevin reminded me that folks are eating, folks are waking up and folks are going to be coming and going, so it’s ok of you to remain seated where you are, this time!

So, as we are creating our space I’ll ask or request of us that we be vigilant about the
sacredness of any community or any space that we set up and that even as you might be in the far back, and even as it becomes enticing as things get good sometimes. Do you ever want to turn to a neighbor, “You know I really agree with that” or “Man, Kev sucks” and I don’t say which Kev we’re talking about, right? So, one of us isn’t any good and you want to turn to a neighbor and say that. So, this is a space that will probably work well for us. But I’ll also ask us to guard the sacredness of this space in terms of our engagement over the course of the next hour or so. Back to Kevin.

Dr. Kecskes

Our friends at the University of Alabama call us the Kevin and Kevin show, in case you haven’t figured it out yet. And we’ve never done this, so at the end you can let us know how it went. I was just doing some last minute reading about community engagement on the plane and I just stopped and closed my book and sat back for a second. I was again shocked by the magnitude, the magnitude of the opportunity that we have here in front of us as members of post-secondary institutions. The magnitude. There are over 4,200 degree-granting institutions in this county alone. In the aggregate we employ more than 3 million people. There are over 18 million students that attend our colleges and universities. And in 2006, in the aggregate post-secondary institutions spent over $373 billion in goods and services. We are an important engine in our communities. We have been here a long time and unlike companies that go off shore and move all over the place, we’re not going anywhere. Last time I looked these buildings are pretty solid. It’s an unbelievable responsibility in front of us. So, we are faced with this magnitude of opportunity. There’s another thing that we’re faced with: Magnitude of inertia, because our institutions are traditional. The role of tradition is to hold the line to let change happen slowly, and there’s a really good role for that.

To help us remember something Clark Kerr, famous president of the University of California Berkeley, said 40 years ago, a real maverick himself in 1963: “The University has become more of a bureaucracy than a community, a mechanism held together by administrative rules and powered by money, a series of individual faculty entrepreneurs held together by a common grievance over parking.” Now you can go to the University of California at Berkeley, and you can see there’s a Clark Kerr Campus and he’s a famous man. This is kind of his summary reflections on a great life in higher education.

So the first thing we want to talk about regarding the models of engagement that we can acknowledge, as we have written here [points to the slide], public relations. Public relations are important. I am assuming everybody in this room knows what that is and why they’re important. I support that. For 10 years, working in the provost’s office at Portland State University, part of what I did was tell our story, and it’s very important. I think that’s where maybe we can start the day, but it’s certainly not where we want to end the day.

Dr. Foster

Our next model of community engagement practiced increasingly is the neoliberal. When we say neoliberal, we are not talking liberal vs. conservative in the contemporary sense. We are talking neoliberal as the revitalization of 19th century liberalism that in the 21st century is what we see in many universities as an increasing bent toward efficiency, effectiveness, partnerships that are in some ways dynamic but can also be, uh, uh, all right, soul-sucking. What I mean by that is that we can do amazing things when we say, you know, we don’t have enough money to build this lab. So let’s go down the street and partner with someone, IBM or whoever, and we can create some new after-school programs, we can create a facility for joint use, or other things that we can do that are efficient and effective that are anything but soul-sucking – they’re exciting and dynamic. But at some point our risk with the neoliberal model is that all we care about is efficiency. And we are not as directly purposeful in terms of our original vision for why we reach out to folks and why we enter into community with folks. We end up tending toward, “Well, this is really a great thing to do and we really can do it” and no one asks, really, why or whether it’s a good thing. But it’s economically prudent, so we do it. So one model of community engagement that has some promise, but also some peril attached, is the neoliberal.

Dr. Kecskes

I want to remind us that today is an important day. Something important is going to happen tonight. And that is our two presidential candidates are going to debate. I assume many of you are going to watch. I certainly am going to try to watch as much of that as I can around the other commitments I have tonight. It reminds me again that this work is “small p” political. Change is political work. And so there are two ways to work
that. We can deny that and run away from that, or we can run into it and embrace it. I do the latter. I lean into it and embrace it. It is absolutely small “p” political work.

And to that end, I want to tell a story about my friend Dick Harmon. Dick Harmon is a senior man. He is a very accomplished man. He’s worked all over the United States and Canada with the Industrial Areas Foundation, which is a community organizing group started by Saul Alinsky in Chicago. Dick Harmon is now in his mid-70s. He and I became friends about 10 years ago, and we talked about how community organizing could work in post-secondary education. One of the things I did in my role as associate vice provost for engagement is we held these civic engagement breakfasts. We would get somewhere between two-and-three hundred people from Portland State and Portland to come to these breakfasts a couple or three times a year, and I said, “Dick, would you come and be one of our two or three main speakers, and you’ll be the first” because I always try to get someone from the community to come and talk. And he said, “Kevin, I’m reluctant.” Anyway, I talked him into coming. So the room was pretty full, over three hundred people in the room, several deans, I think our provost was in the room also. I introduced Dick. I was very happy because my style is to organize things and then get out of the way.

Dick got up. I thought he was going to talk about community organizing, the three rules that organizers live by, things like this. He got up and he went up front and he stood in front of everybody and he looked at me and he said, “Kevin, I’m sorry. I think I’m going to say something right now that’s going to upset you and actually I hope I upset some of you in this room.” He said, “Higher education, higher [more emphasis] education. Does that mean that there’s a lower education?” And he went on to talk about a different kind of way that’s less wrong, about acknowledging each other’s wisdom and knowledge in the room, about finding a new way, about understanding that when we’re doing research, or teaching, there’s multiple sources of wisdom and knowledge everywhere. I sat there thinking, “Oh, no.” But by the end of that hour and a half breakfast I tell you, people loved Dick. They gave him a standing ovation. People wanted him to talk to their classes and engage in partnerships with him, and he said, “Oh, no, I’m on my way out.”

I wanted to tell that story because that hit me, that was five or six years ago, and in a very, very profound way, when I’m working with community partners and when all of us are working with community partners that in fact if we’re trying to facilitate positive change, there are a couple things to keep in mind: It’s political work, and whether we acknowledge it, understand it, or like it, we’re coming from a position of unbelievable power, simply because we are associated with the university. There are many, many ways to break through those walls, but we have to break through those walls. And so we’re going to talk about some of those strategies right now.

Dr. Foster

One aspect of the work is the reality of change, the reality that where many of us hope for our institutions to be is not where they are today and certainly not where they were yesterday. How do we push forward? For many of us it’s a rough journey. If you come from a radical edge, if you are a person whose background marks you as from a marginalized population, if you are among the many folks who enter the academy not with the privilege of knowledge for knowledge sake — which is a beautiful thing — but many of us don’t feel a privilege of knowledge for knowledge sake. We got into it because the world wasn’t good enough. At some point we said, or felt in our hearts, felt in our bones, that the university might be a really good place to work. One of the things Bill Ayers, an elementary education theorist and activist, said was that the university is your base of operations, it’s your home, and from there you hope to go out and do great things. One of the open secrets of the academy — remember how many of us talked about teaching, research and service? We get to divide that into thirds? This is going to be great! — And then what happens when you step onto a campus if you happen to be a junior faculty member? Research, teach competently so you don’t embarrass us, and service, not so much. We have to make choices,
because some of us are teachers in terms of our backgrounds. And someone has the audacity to get up in our faces and say, “Yeah, you’re hired but if you want to be here in five years, don’t spend so much time trying to be a great teacher.” And certainly don’t spend so much time trying to serve, or be a servant, or even be a servant leader. For me the journey of thinking about a continuum of change has been very personal because I’ve had to figure out how I’m going to make it in the academy.

Much of my work is based on the work of my mentor Edmund T. Gordon, chair of the new African and African Diaspora Studies Department at UT-Austin, first as a graduate student about 20 years ago, then I went off and did my own thing. Now I’ve come back to the University of Texas as we are launching this new department. One of the starting points of this idea of contextual interventions is that you see that things aren’t good enough yet and you want to be a part of them being better and you’re trying to engage, but you don’t have the possibility or power yet to fully transform the space. So your work ends up being contextual. You intervene in a context, in a moment, to survive the day. If, for instance, I’m committed to the idea of being an engaged scholar, I work to create space for myself to do that work we’ll call “a contextual intervention.” It will be something where I go out and find a way to take my community engaged work and have it nicely articulate with research, so that I’m going to get publications from my community engaged work. That’s a contextual intervention. That is to say, it’s an intervention in the moment, a solution that helps me survive the day, but does nothing to change the structures of power. In fact, it ends up being complicit with or supportive of the structures of power as they already exist. This making sense at all? All right, I’ll give you a K-12 teaching example.

In the K-12 classroom, in many of our schools, an issue is hunger. The teacher does not have the capacity to solve hunger. But the teacher does have to survive the school day and she does know that her middle-schoolers, especially the three boys over there that are 13 years old and 5’ 11” they are growing and they’re big, and every day at 2 o’clock they’re hungry. This is her fourth year of teaching, so she knows that every day at this time she’s going to have hungry kids. There are health laws that says you can’t take food out of the cafeteria, and there’s a principal’s rule that you can’t have food in the classroom. We haven’t built it into the day. Her contextual intervention is that she has a desk drawer. And what’s in that desk drawer? Granola bars, some little treats, some little fruit snacks. She says, “Lamar, come over here. Johnny, come over here,” and she slips them some food. That’s a contextual intervention. It did nothing to change the structures of power, it did nothing to ameliorate a big societal problem, but it helped her run an effective classroom at 2 p.m. when her boys and girls are hungry.

At some point we can get to structural interventions, where contextual interventions begin to accumulate and we begin to think more systematically. What if, as a faculty member, the contextual intervention for the community engaged scholar was to begin to think creatively about ways to survive the moment and to move toward your tenure track by articulating your research agenda with your service agenda so that you can publish? And that was your contextual intervention. But you start to think about ways to systematize that. You start to think about ways to facilitate this possibility but for other like-minded folks. You find a chair who’s sympathetic, who’s willing to start to open the door a little bit wider. You start to think in terms of how a department at the level of executive committee can start to think about policy changes that will facilitate community-engaged scholarship. Now you’re starting to think in terms of structures of power and how you can engage with others to begin to tweak the rules, change the practices. These are structural interventions.

A structural intervention in our parallel track example would be if I as a teacher who notices hunger, I get with other parents. They say “I know my son or daughter is miserable. Right when I pick them up they’re starving. We have to race home, and they’re incredibly moody, and they’re moody because they’re hungry, so I’m with you on this problem, what can we do.” Well, there’s a church across the street. Why don’t we start doing spaghetti dinners however many nights a week? Or why don’t we talk to the principal about a policy change? By the way, when it comes to contextual interventions, there can also be a resistant edge and I really like the resistant edge. While a contextual intervention can be an intervention that goes and flows with the rules, there can also be a humanizing contextual intervention that has a note of resistance, in other words saying we’re not satisfied with any structures of power that allow inequities, or that allow, for instance, hunger. So a contextual intervention with a resistant edge might be the teacher saying, “It’s wasteful that we throw
out milk cartons at the end of a lunch period if you haven’t finished your milk. Put it in your backpack. We’re going to drink it later.” Now what you’ve done is broken rules. What you’ve done is maybe set yourself up for being written up and eventually fired. But what you’ve also done is humanize the child and allowed them to exist with the notion that their fundamental, basic nutritional needs are more important than somebody’s stupid rules. And that’s an important lesson for children, especially marginalized children who are pushed off the edge. It might even be an important lesson for assistant professors who got in it to change the world but are told everyday to soften up the rough edges. At some point we need to claim our humanity, claim the vision of what we want to do, and fight for what we want to do. Our contextual interventions might sometimes have a resistant edge. By the way, if you’re going to engage any of this stuff, at the end of the day you better be better than all your colleagues when it comes to how much you publish. You better be better than all your colleagues in terms of how much money you accumulate in grants, if that’s the metric. If you’re going to engage this work this way and persist to where Kevin is (or Kevin was until he moved back to faculty from the provost’s office), you better be better than the next. Right? That’s Grandma’s wisdom, by the way.

Contextual interventions, structural interventions, what do we hope for? What we hope for is structural transformation [glances at the slide]. How often does structural transformation come about? Not very often. Last I checked there are still plenty of kids who are hungry. But we’re always about the win, we’re also about working toward something, but it’s also about the righteousness of the fight and always battling to make it better. Maybe we get to the point of structural transformation but there’s righteousness in the journey, so we stay on that path but what we want is the end of world hunger — right? — to put it in a kind of silly or crass way.

What we want at a University of Texas, a Portland State, a University of Alabama is where it’s going to be better, where the walls come tumbling down, in a kind of silly or crass way. At some point we need to claim our humanity, claim the vision of what we want to do, and fight for what we want to do. Our contextual interventions might sometimes have a resistant edge. By the way, if you’re going to engage any of this stuff, at the end of the day you better be better than all your colleagues when it comes to how much you publish. You better be better than all your colleagues in terms of how much money you accumulate in grants, if that’s the metric. If you’re going to engage this work this way and persist to where Kevin is (or Kevin was until he moved back to faculty from the provost’s office), you better be better than the next. Right? That’s Grandma’s wisdom, by the way.

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What we want at a University of Texas, a Portland State, a University of Alabama is where it’s porous, where the walls come tumbling down, in a sense, and there’s this nice seamless integration, so that those who pay their taxes in this state, those who are working in this state, benefit from what this university has to offer and the back and forth is this nice flow. I don’t know, I haven’t been here too long, but at least at the University of Texas I can tell you we ain’t there yet. But I persist at the University of Texas because the fight is righteous, because everyday that I live in righteousness — I don’t mean to sound so preacherly — but everyday you live in this, you are not living on the other side of the fence, and at some point it does become almost a Manichean duality where it’s like are you right or you’re wrong and you wake up in the morning and you go to bed at night and you know whether you did right or you did wrong. The beauty of this work is that you can go to bed tired, you might go to bed with tears on your pillow, but when you go to bed you actually rest easy, because you know that you’re doing what you need to do. This is all about being purposeful on that journey and setting yourself up in a way to continue on that journey without losing your mind, a way to continue on this journey with a solid sense of where you’re trying to go.

Dr. Kecskes

I’m going to talk about traditional vs. engaged scholarship. But before I do, I want to share another little story. The quick background on this story is this: In case you didn’t know, or in case you had a sense of it but didn’t know how much, this work, this engagement work in postsecondary education, is on fire on a global level. This is not just happening in the South. It’s not just happening in America. It is happening on a global level. Guaranteed. It’s unbelievable what’s happening, and guess where it’s really happening a lot right now? In the Arab world.

Four or five years ago some colleagues from the Gerhart Center for Philanthropy and Civic Engagement in Cairo contacted to do a training with faculty and administrators in the Middle East for a week. I said, “No way. No way. Where will the training be?” “It’s going to be in Beirut.” “No Way. Thank you. No thank you.”

They contacted me a third time and I said, “OK. I will seriously consider coming because you have been so persistent but only if you find a female co-equal presenter to work with me for this week who’s from the Arab world.” They got back with me a few days later, and so my colleague Amani Elshimi and I led this workshop.

The training was organized by a new alliance called the Ma’an Arab University Alliance for Civic Engagement which is connected to the Tallores Network, an international association housed by Tufts University. There were about 65 people there in Beirut for a week who had gathered together, as Amani and I were together to plan this workshop. But I said to her, “Look, I don’t even speak Arabic. I am not a Middle
Eastern specialist. I feel uncomfortable in this role. First and foremost, before we do anything, I’d like to just find out where people are. Let’s just start with a simple thing. Let’s just ask them, ‘What is community for you, in your context?’” We North Americans, including me, generally don’t have a complete sense about the Arab World. There are 22 countries in the Arab world; it spreads from North Africa all the way East to the Persian Gulf. It’s an enormous slice of our earth, with great diversity. “Let’s just ask people in their context, ‘What is community?’” I suggested to Amani and she agreed.

Guess how long it took to answer that question? Two days. That was great, and from a training standpoint, it was fantastic. The group came to a deep, collective understanding, a sense within themselves, of what community is in their individual contexts and collectively. Very interesting work. Unbelievably, interesting work. We wrote some of this up and presented it a couple of years back. Then Amani and I started asking them about their own stories of community engagement. The take-away that really hit me hard as a professional in this field is how they spoke about their students working out in communities in generations-old struggles or how their students protested in the local streets and that for some of them that was community engagement. Those faculty spoke about trying to make a better life; they were trying to do some of the things that Kevin is talking about in terms of structural transformation. They spoke about how some of their students had been injured, or taken to prison, or even killed. It hit me hard that day – I had to hold onto the side of the table. Unlike my experience here in America … . Now I wasn’t in the South 40 years ago in the struggles for civil rights. But it hit me hard that day – this was now three or four years ago – that in their message and experiences were a harbinger of things to come for the Arab Spring; that for them, in some cases, community engagement could mean confronting serious social injustice, and in the extreme could even be a life and death situation.

That’s simply not my experience here in America, with service-learning, for example. That’s just not my experience, and so it really made me begin to think in a new and deeper way about how important, impactful, powerful this work is. And yet here in a North American context we situate this work in the “safe” traditions of our hallowed postsecondary institutions, which I love. So, this is hard work; now, on to community-engaged scholarship.

Some of you might have seen versions of Table 1, which we have modified from the original by Dr. Andrew Furco (2006) at the University of Minnesota.

This side-by-side conceptual comparison table is quite useful. The point of this slide is this: Many of you have heard or will hear people say something like “This community engaged scholarship is it’s not rigorous. I don’t know what it is. It seems so fluffy. But if we take a look we see that traditional scholarship breaks new ground. We all know what it is. We all know how important that is. We have traditional journals that support it. We have chairs in departments that value it. We value it ourselves. It is how we progress. It’s how we make new knowledge. In an engaged paradigm, however, we have to break new ground in the discipline and have direct application in a broader public issues. The bar is higher, not lower. Not only does it have to meet all the rigors of traditional scholarship, but it has to meet an additional value propositions. It has to have applicable value at some level. Second thing, it answers significant questions in the discipline that have to be relevant to community or public issues. It’s a higher bar. Third, it’s reviewed and validated by qualified peers in the discipline and the community. That’s a really scary place. Theoretically grounded and practically applicable. And finally it advances disciplinary knowledge and public knowledge.

So, I’ve been hearing for many years as many of you have, “Yeah, but it’s not rigorous, it’s soft.” I don’t buy it. Because I do it. And it’s hard. It’s really hard work. Last thing I’ll say about this and I’ll pass it back to Kevin is this: An old paradigm is much more linear. In fact if we want to take it to its end, we sometimes think we know the answers to the questions or we launch out to look for the answers to the questions that we think we already have when conducting research. And that is so different from an emergent model where, rather than going out into the community with our questions in mind and our answers in mind, we work with community members in a much more iterative manner; it’s much messier milieu in which the questions emerge over time. It takes longer, it’s harder work. We can ask ourselves and our community partners, however we define them, the extent to which they involved in question generation, methodology choice, data gathering, data analysis, and dissemination. I’m not here to tell you what’s the right answer, but I am here to ask myself first and foremost and you also: How do those processes work for you? Who develops
the questions? Is it you in your office, alone with
the door closed? How do we gather the data, who
helps, who has a hand in it, who has a hand in
the analysis? And finally, who leads and assists
in the dissemination? These are really important
questions. I’ll just end this little piece by saying
from my own personal experiences, engaged
scholarship is a lot harder, a lot more work.

We’re moving now toward the final part of
our remarks. What Kevin and I would like to do
is share some examples, first from Portland State
and then from the University of Texas at Austin,
and then end with a short video clip in which we’ll
give you a small slice of what engaged teaching and
scholarship can look like, and a little surprise at
the end.

Two pieces I’d like to talk about at Portland
State, institutional transformation and capstones.
Now, when Kevin and I were discussing our
remarks today, he said, “Kevin, Portland State is
an example of structural transformation,” as he
described. I said, “Well, tell me more about that.”
Because I am a little too close, I’m not sure that he’s
got me completely convinced, but I will say there
are two things we do at Portland State that I’m very
good at, and that I think are emblematic of a deep
kind of change in postsecondary education similar
to the deep change Kevin spoke about. Number
one: in 1996, PSU was one of the first institutions
in the country to do this, in the vanguard of a
new wave of action – we changed our promotion
and tenure guidelines to directly support engaged
scholarship. Show of hands if you’ve been working
in the last five years on changing your institution’s
promotion and tenure guidelines. Yeah, is that
fun? [Laughs] It’s creative work, right? It can be
creative work. It’s hard work. It is political work,
small “p”. In 1996, Portland State University
stepped back because we wanted to be an engaged
institution before we were even using that language
and to honor our motto that our students gave our
then-President Judith Ramaley, “Let knowledge
serve the city.” Well, if you want to let knowledge
serve the city, you need to let it show up where it
counts, in the promotion and tenure guidelines.
You’d be surprised how many calls I get saying,
“We want to come out to Portland State and see
how you changed your promotion and tenure
guidelines, because we’re trying to do that at our
university. We want to come out, send a whole
team to visit you.” And I say, “I’ll tell you what.
We can save you some money because there is
nothing here to see. You can go on the website, go
to the Provost’s page. You can look at Section 5.
We called it then the “Scholarship of Outreach.”
That was the language that was used in the mid
1990s, thanks in large part to Ernest Lynton and
Amy Driscoll. We have examples for artists, which
are very different from that for natural scientists,
which is very different from social scientists. We
have examples.” And they say, “But we want to
come out and see how you did it.” How we did it
was about us, PSU’s process. How you will do it is
really what’s most important. Now if you’d like,
we can have a chat about some processes, maybe
thinking about who you want around the table

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<th>Table 1. Traditional and Engaged Scholarship Comparison</th>
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<td><strong>Traditional</strong></td>
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<td>— Breaks new ground in the discipline.</td>
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<td>— Theoretically grounded.</td>
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<td><strong>Engaged</strong></td>
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talking about some change in leadership strategies that might expedite the process. But at the end of the day, it’s hard work, it is very contextualized to the local level; it’s about you.

So we did it. I’ll tell you just a small vignette here. It wasn’t pretty, and it hasn’t been pretty, and here’s part of why it hasn’t been elegant. For 100 people in the room there were a 100 different interpretations of what was said. Also there are institutional promotion and tenure guidelines, and those sometimes translate directly down to departments and disciplines and sometimes they don’t articulate at all, and that’s a real problem for our junior faculty. Here’s another problem. Some faculty said, “Well, I’ve been doing all this service, and I’ve been letting knowledge serve the city, and I’ve been working with these community partners and I’ve got my students involved, and I’m a really effective teacher. Take a look at my reviews. I’ve been working with these community partners. We did all these brochures and these websites. Look at how my community partners have increased their funding, and so on.” While everything that faculty member said may have been true it didn’t meet the key measures of what we as an Academy would hold as rigorous scholarship. That faculty member didn’t get it, wasn’t advised properly, and when they came up for tenure, they were denied. And so that sent shock waves through our faculty. “Oh, well, it’s all rhetoric, it’s all rhetoric,” some faculty said. Institutionally, we got stalled; we were confused. So, it’s hard work.

That was number one, now the second of two examples of PSU’s structural transformation. I’d like to talk about our Capstone Program. At Portland State University what we did in the early nineties is we completely changed the entire undergraduate general education program. I’m not going into that whole story but the essence of it is our then-provost was a historian of education, and he said, “We’re good at one thing for sure as a university community; we’re good at research.” So he pulled together some of the best researchers and came back and said, “We can’t prove it to you, the distribution model basically doesn’t work.” In fact the research that’s been out now for 20 or 30 years by people like Peter Ewell [Vice President at the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems] and many others, many of you in the room, for sure, say this kind of curricular distribution model doesn’t work very well for students. So the provost charged the faculty a second time for a second year to create something they felt would work, based on evidence. Using the research that we had in the early nineties, the faculty team then built what’s now known as our University Studies program, which has integrated today about seven of AACU’s [Association of American Colleges and Universities] 10 High Impact practices, especially those that have to do with engaged learning. Service-learning is one of the proven practices, first-year seminars, community-based research, and so on. If you don’t know about those High Impact practices based on really ground-breaking research by George Kuh [High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access To Them, and Why They Matter], I encourage you to take a look at those because they align quite well with this work. They are all evidence-based practices; they are powerful; they work!

One of the things we have at Portland State at the end of our undergraduate program is a required six-credit, interdisciplinary Capstone course. Each capstone is team-based and community-based. Every undergraduate has to take one to graduate. Here are a couple of pieces of the Capstone. The first year that my predecessor, Amy Driscoll, developed Capstones PSU came out of the box with five of them. The concern at that time was that there would not be enough personnel to fully support these five Capstones. Each Capstone has a maximum of 15 people and they’re all theme based. So for example, a capstone could be just about anything that has to do with community. Students come together from multiple disciplines. They work together, ideally over two terms, and bring diverse disciplinary points of view to bear to try to address a salient community issue.

That was almost 20 years ago. Today, that program persists, and last academic year we 234 Capstones were offered, 234! Almost 4,000 of our seniors and some juniors took a community-based Capstone. This Capstone experience is now part of who we are. Our faculty in the Capstone Program are some of our best teachers on campus and in the last five years we have spread that work internationally. For example, I taught a Capstone in Oaxaca, Mexico where we worked on community health issues. Those are two examples of how a university can step back and make good on this idea of structural transformation.

Dr. Foster
I’ve learned about Portland State from afar, and it’s been really exciting to hear. The University of Texas is hard to move. It’s so big. Some of our other institutions are so much more nimble. I look to Portland State and hearing Kev, there’s just amazing stuff going on there. For me, a faculty member at the University of Texas at Austin, the immediate intervention was to start to think through, from a conceptual standpoint, how to bring research and service together. But then there was also the teaching piece and there was also the reality that I’m committed to my graduate students emerging as a certain type of scholar. I want them to be rigorous from a methodological standpoint. I want them to be rigorous in terms of their theoretical grounding, but I also desperately want them to be deeply community engaged, to their core. This is who they are as emerging scholars. The structural intervention that came was the creation of ICUSP, which is the Institute for Community University and School Partnerships. I was told not to do this, strongly encouraged not to start this. The long story short is that ICUSP became COBRA. These were some of the programs that we had over time and each one has its own back story. COBRA is the Community of Brothers and Revolutionary Alliance. COBRA was started because I was hanging out in community and there was this thing called African American Men and Boys Conference that happened once a month. We came together and we did a whole lot of talking at kids and it was a good thing on a certain level, but we all knew it wasn’t enough. I got to know a principal there because we’d see each other month after month, and at some point he said, “Kevin, this is great but here’s my problem on my campus. Would you be willing to come and do something?” I came as a volunteer, sat in the library and had 12 African American boys and we were working on disciplinary referrals and their engagement and this sort of thing. The long story short, this became COBRA. The boys came up with the name. There’s a novel by Sam Greenlee called The Spook Who Sat by the Door. If you ever teach it you have to work on the misogynistic aspects of it. It’s a Black Power era novel. There’s a problem with the novel but there’s also a lot going on in the novel that’s really powerful in terms of having people be self-advocates, having people emerge as intellectuals who are purposeful about change, etc. It’s a revolutionary text and the gang that our hero in the novel turned into a revolutionary organization they just don’t know it. Voices came into being, because after our first year on campus things went really well and money was a little more flush back then. The district came and said, something’s happened in our data on this campus. This particular cell, African American boys, has just exploded because 12 African American boys makes a difference on the campus. So what do you do? I don’t really know. You do whatever we did and they say well that sounds good enough for us, here’s money, which was an interesting lesson, by the way. They didn’t understand what we did. We barely understood what we did. But at that moment it was solving a problem, so here’s money. Times have changed a little bit, by the way. But everything’s cyclical. It’ll come back around again. We were doing good work, so I was happy to take their money.

When we expanded we went to another campus and within a couple of months the boys’ group was going great, and some young ladies came to us and they said, “This is not fair, this is not right. You’ve got a boys’ group, what about us?” And I went back to the district and said, “What about them?” and the district said we’re not worried about them. They didn’t mean to say it that crassly, but they basically did. They had a focus on what was happening with black boys in particular and so that became their focus and everything else was going to be OK until it became a crisis too. But that wasn’t good enough for the young ladies. So we said to the young ladies, just come to the meetings. They came for about three weeks and they said, “Yeah, no. We want our own.” So we reallocated our resources, shifted things around, and we created a girls’ group beside the boys’ group. They named it VOICES, Verbally Outspoken Individuals Creating Empowered Sisters [laughter and applause]. You can clap. They were immediately tighter and better than anything the boys had ever done. They were amazing. I won’t go into the next ones right now.

One of the things we do with ICUSP right now. Have any of you ever seen “Ted Talks”? We thought about it and one of the things I’m interested in is more and more scholars getting on this bandwagon, more and more scholars waking up to the possibilities, waking up to the possibility of engaged scholarship. Now faculty members have very small egos, right? No, faculty members have huge egos, and I have discovered, if I can talk to scholars, other faculty members, about how their work can be disseminated more broadly, how other people can learn the brilliant things
that they have to say, they’re often on board. But it comes with a catch. You’re going to have to go through our training. We partner with KLRU public television – how many of you have seen “Austin City Limits?” We record on the historic set of Austin City Limits twice a year. Five Black Studies faculty members basically giving “Ted Talks” to Black Studies and we’re fighting over the name, calling it Blackademics right now but we’ll probably lose the name. If anybody has a cool name to replace ours, that’ll be great. What we do is take time to train them in principles of adult learning, principles associated with new media presentations, being in front of a camera, etc. Then they all do 12-minute talks. They edit them down as television shows, so every two talks becomes a TV show, and every talk is released online on an almost monthly basis. So that’s one different form of community engagement that’s taking advantage of new media.

My staff are all graduate students. This is one of the COBRA chapters [slide]. All of these boys are in college, every one of them. COBRA began young COBRA, which is our middle school version [new slide]. This slide is some of our kids talking about a video they had made. So these are sixth graders talking before three hundred of their peers from across the city. One of our chapters brought in the author Sam Greenlee [slide]. These are the kids using technology on the University of Texas campus. By the way, if you teach anything with public education, when you have partnerships, one of the things that is really cool is the opportunity for kids who live in the surrounding area to begin to see the possibilities. When I teach a course on public education, I invite high school kids to come in. I’ll prep the kids and talk to them about the reality that they know more about high school than the college students. When it comes down to it, they are the experts in the room. They should not be hesitant to raise their hands and to say something if I or someone else gets it wrong. We’re beginning to invite them in to the idea of college as a possibility. They are familiar with this technology because they’re working with it when we bring them to campus. COBRA teaching young COBRA, intergenerational work. This is a workshop on what it’s going to be like in high school. By the way, every different color is a different chapter [looks at slide]. The kids have their school colors on. We don’t do T-shirts. We do polo shirts with embroidered lettering and there’s a sense of empowerment, a sense that they’re part of something special when they are involved.

[Shows slide] This is two years ago. This is some of the kids in COBRA. I don’t have any money, but I go to church. When we go somewhere, I have folks at this particular church and they have six vans, one of those big churches. And they are awesome about, “Ah, yeah, Dr. Foster you can do this. We’ll help you out” with this that and the other. Vans become not much of a problem. Here’s a free-trade [slide] coffee house. They love to have kids in. They’re very global. They’re not charging us money. They’re giving kids samples of this and that. It’s very global in perspective when they’re seeing this stuff. I’m not an elected official but I have a lot of kids and all my kids have parents. And the parents vote. So if I call Congressman Doggett and I say I’ve got 300 kids and the 300 kids have parents, guess what? "Kev, yes, I'll sit down with you and I'll record a video congratulating the kids on their work." Same with Councilman Cole, Council Spellman: “I’ve got an awards ceremony, are you willing to come and record a special note?” “Absolutely.” Support from campus leaders and by the way I have two kids and for this work, for this to work, and this work is hard, like a 90-hour work week, but it’s a fun 90-hour work week if I integrate it with the rest of my life. Everyone has to make their own decisions about this. I integrate it with my life. My kids know the COBRA kids and the VOICES kids, because my kids are on the field trips. [Points to slide] That’s my kid son Malcolm, that’s my daughter Marly, they come with us, they’re engaged. And by the way, an unearned privilege that my kids have is that there’s no questions about their leadership ability, their leadership skills. There’s no question that they’re going to go to college, there’s no question that what was once about being a first generation person. It’s not going to be a problem about being a second generation, third generation, fourth generation because they are integrated into the life of the work. Whether they love Dad or hate Dad they know what Dad’s about.

[Slide] This is my staff. Does it look like we have fun? We have a lots of fun. Now a University of Illinois professor, now a University of North Texas professor, now working in a university outreach center, local arts activists, still graduate student and two more that are still more graduate students. My graduate students actually get jobs. What I’ve found over and over again when folks call us is that – at UT we’ve got research dollars, we’ve got the courses, we’ve got the course work – folks don’t get hired because they fail the interview. Folks don’t get hired because there are
so many amazing people out there. It turns out that community engagement is something that, like Kev was saying, is something many folks are interested in. When any of my students begin to tell their story and begin to show the purpose of their work, the pride in their work, and how their scholarship is integrated with a profound ability to engage community in powerful ways, we find they are landing jobs.

Dr. Keckes

We want to end this with a strong sense of hope. For those of you have been in this field for as long as I have, you'll laugh at this. Twenty-five years ago, the most important thing we debated — and I can go back and show you the archives on the higher education service-learning listserv — the most important thing that we debated, according to us at that time, was whether the term service-learning should carry a hyphen of not. [laughter] That's where we were, and that's fine. Today we have graduate student networks, we have multiple international associations that support this work, just like NOSC. We have numerous publication outlets. We have graduate students like yourselves and undergraduates who are hungry for this work. New young faculty are coming in expecting it, students are expecting it. What a difference a quarter of a century makes!

Where we want to end this piece is with a short video. It's about three or four minutes. In this video you'll see a man who is on the faculty at Portland State who is an architect, who is very community engaged. I encourage you to watch for things like how he teaches, who's there, what they're doing, if you can see some research around it and enjoy a little snippet of what community-based learning or service-earning can look like. I'll just say that one of the things that was very important to Professor Sergio Palleroni, because his two kids before he moved to Portland had to go to school in temporary classrooms, in trailers, and he hated it, because he knows all the research shows that if you have natural light, good ventilation and some other simple adjustments, kids learn lot better. It's been a real fight for him. At the end of the story I'll tell you what's happened since. This is on our website, if you want to see it again.


[Applause]

So the epilogue to this video, which was made a couple of years ago, is now Sergio, the main professor, is so passionate about the role of architecture in creating better learning environments for these kids is that he's successfully lobbied the Oregon Legislature and now his work has made a hopefully permanent public policy change. All modular classrooms, AKA trailers, in Oregon will have to meet certain specs that he has designed focusing on natural light, ventilation, basic design elements that are actually cost efficient. To me that's a way of showing how the structural transformation, how one faculty member's vision and work, in combination with the whole community, really makes permanent, durable change. So back to Kev.

Dr. Foster

So Dr. Pleasants is a brilliant conference planner so we have a post-plenary dialog at 2:30 in room Rast B for any folks who want to continue the dialog. Kevin and I will get together and think about how we can create an interactive space. What you've found is two folks who like to talk. Right? But we do hope is that this was information packed. Was there good information this morning [loud applause]? And one of the things we both know, and we've talked about this a little bit, is that we have ideas that we've developed over the years, and we're excited about them, we're passionate about them, we're excited about them, but we are also keenly aware of what is in the room in terms of the work that you all are doing. We really want to continue a dialog this afternoon by opening it up.

Kev's work is accessible at PSU's Hatfield School of Government faculty page (http://www.pdx.edu/hatfieldschool/kevin-keckes-bs-edm-phd). For my work, go to Academia.edu. It's an awesome place. Kind of like Facebook for nerds. You can start your page and there's a space to upload documents. All of my documents, all of my articles, and I have to fight with my publishers, are available there as a PDF. Follow me on Twitter and I'll follow you back. Also there's the ICUSP Facebook page. If you to the Portland State page you'll see examples of the video, you'll see examples of the work they're doing there.

Thank you to the conference host and conference planners. This has been an excuse for me to get to know a new friend and colleague, so I...
really like this set up. I hope it worked for you all.

References


About the Authors

Dr. Kevin Kesckes is an associate professor of Public Administration at Portland State University. Dr. Kevin Foster is an assistant professor of Educational Administration at The University of Texas at Austin.
Abstract

NOSC 2012 had many firsts, including the largest conference in the organization’s 13-year history and the highest number of community partner participants. But the real breakthrough was the emerging understanding and respect scholars and community partners developed for each other, which came home in a variety of ways, from the number of community partners attending to the “ah ha” moment when one delegate first understood how essential community partners are to all aspects of engaged scholarship.

Introduction

The 2012 National Outreach Scholarship Conference (now Engagement Scholarship Consortium) held on the campus of The University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, broke ground where community partner engagement was concerned. While there are no official counts of the number of community partners who have attended or made presentations at the 12 previous conferences, veteran officials believe NOSC 2012 set records both in the number of community partners attending and making presentations. Of the approximately 235 presentations and workshops made at the conference, 33 were by community partners and many other community partners assisted in presentations in the two other tracks, Voice of the Faculty and Staff and Voice of the Student.

Having attended two conferences prior to this one, I only realized how valuable community partners are to university research when I became immersed in the activities of the 2012 conference. At this conference, the facilitators and presenters went deeper and farther concerning the involvement of community partners than at any of the previous conferences I had attended. Community partners were not only invited to attend workshops; they were also included at the table in making plans and this conference made history by having a Voice of the Community Partner track, with many presentations by community members. This was monumental and meant that community partners could be seen as critical to the success of the conference. Community partners in attendance were from a record 14 states.

As president of the Black Belt Community Foundation in Selma, Ala., I have benefited from partnerships with The University of Alabama and others since our founding in 2004. UA Vice President for Community Affairs Dr. Samory Pruitt serves on our Board of Trustees and always includes my organization whenever there is a mutually beneficial project. However, when Dr. Pruitt asked me to serve on the planning committee for the conference, I was hesitant. Although I hold a graduate degree, I did not know if I would have anything valuable to contribute to the dialogue, and I did not know if the group would be genuinely interested in my community-focused opinions. I was a little intimidated because I was entering their “circle.” But after attending the meetings, I realized that Dr. Pruitt did not just want to talk community engagement; he wanted to put some real effort behind it and make it happen. That was a great learning experience for me. In addition to my attendance, Dr. Pruitt also helped 10–15 of my community associates attend the conference.
as well. For most of them this was their first time
to attend a scholarly conference, and they came away with an immensely enjoyable and useful
learning experience.

There was something for just about every
community interest at the conference, and the
attendees with whom I talked were very pleased,
not just over the content but also because of
the welcoming feeling they received from the
university scholars. One of my Black Belt
Community Foundation’s community associates,
Sheryl Threadgill-Matthews (2012), who runs an
after-school and summer enrichment program for
children in rural Wilcox County, expressed the
feeling well:

I am so appreciative of the opportunity
to attend the NOSC conference. The
networking was invaluable. I was so
inspired and encouraged. Sometimes we
need to take time away from our servant
roles for time to be stimulated. I came
back with a renewed energy.

Paulette Newbern (2012), a community arts
program volunteer in Pickens County, wrote:

Thank you, Black Belt Community
Foundation, for making it possible for me
to attend the NOSC conference. I must
say I gained a wealth of knowledge from the
presenters and I did some wonderful
networking. This will certainly help me
to be more effective in the work I do in
my community. The community partners
were included in every aspect of the
conference and made to feel like we were
an integral part of every discussion.

It became quickly clear to any community
partner and representative attending the
conference that this would be a conference that
gave more than lip service to the importance of
community partnerships in engaged scholarship.
For example, there was a clear focus on the rights
of the community partners to be listed as full
partners in published research and the obligation
of universities to share funding received for
research with the partners. I heard a version of
this principle evoked at several presentations and
it gave me encouragement about the future of
university-community partnerships.

Another “ah ha” moment for me was that
in the past we have always wanted universities
to approach us with projects, but during the
sessions we repeatedly heard that partners should
not hesitate to approach universities suggesting
problems where university resources could be
combined with community resources for social
and/or economic progress. Until I heard this, it
had never occurred to me that we could approach
these groups and that they would be as eager to
work with us along those lines.

For example, my organization works to
transform the most economically challenged
counties in the state of Alabama through our
small grants program, leadership opportunities,
non-profit organizations, financial literacy, and
networking. Prior to the conference, I thought
unless a university approached us with a project
and funding, I could not solicit their assistance.
We raise dollars from the community, and we
invest dollars in the community. Change happens
in the community, but it only happens when you
work with the people in the community. One-way
projects, where only the “experts” do the research,
have proven over and over again to be a dead end.
The days of research being a one-sided relationship
seem on their way out. Unfortunately, people who
live in the Black Belt Region of Alabama have
been accustomed to such one-sided treatment. The
organization or university gets the grant dollars,
starts a program, and leaves when the funds run
out. Many of us came away from NOSC 2012
with the resolve that if a university wants to work
with us, then it needs to make us an equitable
partner, bringing its resources to the table—because
we are also bringing our resources to the table,
which includes the people we recruit from our
communities. We may not all have large financial
resources, but we all have other things that are
just as valuable, for example our knowledge of the
problems and our ideas about their solutions. We
know “the lay of the land.” Until NOSC 2012 I
didn’t fully understand the attractiveness or the
benefits that partnering with my organization
brings to the university or larger organization.

All along we have both needed each other,
but we are just now accepting and acknowledging
that. As large as The University of Alabama is,
still could not reach the people in the Black
Belt that it is reaching without the assistance of
the Black Belt Community Foundation. In fact,
without our input, the University might even
miss what the most important issues to us are.
The University helps bring scholarly credibility
to our organization, while we help take away the
skepticism the community has about scholars. This

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mutual support and interdependence, I learned at the conference, is the most valuable thing in determining whether an engaged project will have a successful outcome that benefits all participants.

References


About the Author
Felecia Jones is president of the Black Belt Community Foundation in Selma, Alabama, and member of the NOSC 2012 University of Alabama Planning Committee.
Abstract
As a professional conference that brought hundreds of scholars at various levels, community partners, and students together in common purpose, NOSC 2012 proved to be an unusually rich experience for this University of Alabama graduate student. It provided a greater understanding of the field of engaged scholarship, as well as many opportunities for networking and clarifying career goals.

Introduction
Attending the 13th Annual National Outreach Scholarship Conference (NOSC) in October 2012 was exciting and educationally rewarding. As a graduate student attending the conference, I was given the opportunity to do what the literature says is especially important for graduate students: Becoming socialized into the graduate-research experience through association with experienced scholars. Not only was this an opportunity to network with other professional researchers, graduate students, and community advocates from around the country, it also helped students gain a greater understanding of the meaning and depth of engaged scholarship.

Knight (2002) writes that attending professional meetings will extend students’ experiences beyond the classroom and that graduate advisors should encourage students to stay on after sessions to seek out presenters to ask questions in informal sessions. This was just what I, along with scores of other students, did during NOSC 2012.

More than 20 years ago, I decided to become a journalist based on the belief that accurate information improves quality of life, opening up opportunities that would otherwise be missed. Therefore, the chance to attend a scholarly conference dedicated to the practice of active research that combines university resources and knowledge with community resources and practical experience in an effort to achieve sustainable solutions to community problems interested me professionally, personally, and socially.

Conference Impressions
What impressed me most was the number of students presenters—one group with actual presenters as young as 7 years old! I also found especially interesting the “grow your own” emphasis I saw during the Emerging Engagement Scholars pre-conference workshop.

This workshop, held annually as part of NOSC (now Engagement Scholarship Consortium or ESC), brings about 20 graduate students and junior faculty members together from all over the world for an intensive workshop on all aspects of the scholarly life in which they are mentored by experienced scholars. The young scholars also attend regular conference sessions as part of their program. Emerging Engagement Scholars are accepted in an application process that includes a paper about their research interests. They come from all kinds of institutions, not just ESC member institutions, and their research involves a wide variety of subject areas.

As a writer for the Center for Community-Based Partnerships (CCBP) at The University of Alabama, I had the opportunity to personally interview several of these students regarding...
their research, as well as others whose research was presented during the conference. The young scholars told how the opportunity to participate and conduct research and to mingle with veteran researchers in informal settings helped them to understand the value of their education.

After graduation, emerging scholar Jackie Brodsky (2012) seeks the benefits of working with a community agency and incorporating the agency's goals into her work. Brodsky is at the dissertation stage of her doctoral studies in the School of Library and Information Studies at Alabama. Her research deals with age-related disabilities and the difficulties those disabilities create in a world where information increasingly is accessed through technology. “Just hearing about the research process from someone who has been through it will be helpful,” she said. “I know that whoever they put me with will have experience in engaged scholarship as a principal investigator.” She said she looked forward to working with an experienced researcher and the opportunity to have feedback throughout the year as she continues research for her dissertation. Brodsky and other program participants were exposed to information concerning community-engaged scholarship through background literature reviews, facilitated discussions, and presentations from both national leaders in their fields of expertise and from community partners. In addition they worked with mentors during the conference and afterward.

Another Emerging Scholar, Christel Beverly, a sports and exercise psychology doctoral student at Michigan State University, was surprised by the encouragement for engaged research that she found when she attended NOSC:

“It was a safer environment where engaged scholars could be comfortable and find encouragement, which was different from what I experienced at conferences which prioritize quantitative work over qualitative work. The people there were all on the same page where engaged scholarship is concerned. I like the more equalized dynamic between the researcher and the community members.

Beverly’s research interests are specifically related to K-12 education in urban regions, with emphasis on how sports leadership impacts the entire school population. As a former high school athletic director, Beverly, who holds an undergraduate degree in socioloby and African American Studies from Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania, said engaged scholarship works well with her hands-on approach as a practitioner. “A couple of presentations were very helpful and they got me thinking more critically about my own work and interacting with more people,” she said, adding that she was glad to see the support for this type of research taking on national prominence.

“I don’t just want to do research and publish papers that nobody is going to read. I want to create tangible research that is presented in a manner that the average person can understand and use,” Beverly said. “I think everybody should be required to attend a conference like this. Traditional research is disengaged and removed from emotion. Rewiring universities and think-tanks to move in a different direction when they’ve done it a certain way for so long will be hard, but not impossible.” As an educator who is heavily invested in her community and its future, Beverly hopes engagement research is the way of the future.

“The community partner has just as much to teach me as I have to offer them,” she said. “That just takes a bit of humility on the part of the researcher and sometimes that is difficult.”

Opportunity to Present

But it was not only in the pre-conference workshop that students were evident. They were given dozens of opportunities to present original research during the main conference. Overall there were 57 student-led presentations from many disciplinary groups. Most of these students were doctoral researchers, but many were master’s level students like myself; there were even a few undergraduates. Elliot Knight, at the time a doctoral student at UA but who got his start as a researcher while still an undergraduate, presented his research “100 Lenses: How Arts-Based Youth Partnerships Transform Students’ Lives.” Today, let it be known, Mr. Knight, a recent graduate, is gainfully employed! He is the Visual Arts Program Manager at the Alabama State Council on the Arts in Montgomery, Alabama. Like me, during his time as a graduate student at the University, he was a graduate assistant in the Center for Community-Based Partnerships.

Knight said:

The research has given me a much better understanding of the processes and contexts that lead to students feeling more creative and confident. I have
seen students, at the junior high, high school, and college levels, become more engaged in their communities and take on leadership roles in their schools and communities because of the visual skills—especially photography and videography—that the program teaches. This research allowed me to conceptualize, design, and implement future programs and creative learning environments that meet students’ creative, leadership, and educational goals (2012).

Although UA has taken a huge step forward by incorporating and encouraging student participation at professional conferences, it is not the only university that recognizes the educational value of students’ getting this kind of experience early in their career. Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon, has a student-led program that incorporates undergraduates in research and presentation with faculty (Fritzman, 2008). The program encourages faculty-student collaboration, serving to integrate research and teaching and advancing the culture of scholarship at Lewis & Clark.

Like Lewis & Clark, Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville also has launched an undergraduate program to encourage student presentations. Students are required to present their work at the annual SIUE Undergraduate Research Symposium (Pawlow & Retzlaff, 2012). Follow-up research showed that six of seven students who applied to graduate school were accepted and three of four students who did not apply for graduate school had already found jobs in their discipline area. Thus, the more involved students were in research, the more likely they were to achieve their goals after graduation.

One reason The University of Alabama had so many student presenters at NOSC 2012 may be because of a program that gives undergraduates experience in making conference presentations. The Undergraduate Research & Creative Activity Conference held on the UA campus is a premier annual event that provides undergraduates an opportunity to highlight their research or creative activity. In addition to bringing attention to the excellent work of students, the conference allows students to gain experience presenting, to compete for cash prizes, and to form relationships with their faculty mentors and fellow conference presenters (http://osp.ua.edu/UndergradResearch.html).

Conclusion

Through experiences like NOSC 2012, and I near completion of my master’s thesis, I am more and more able to see the value of conducting research that translates into experience and transferable skills—while at the same time providing a service in keeping with our motto at CCBP, “Engaging Communities and Changing Lives.”

References


About the Author

Kirsten J. Barnes is a practicing journalist who has worked with several daily newspapers in Alabama, Georgia, and Ohio. She currently is publisher of a regional newsmagazine The Black Belt Connection and supervises a student newspaper at Alabama State University in Montgomery, while working on her master’s in journalism at The University of Alabama. She has plans to study for her doctorate upon completion of her master’s.
This project, funded through the University of Missouri College of Human Environmental Sciences Margaret W. Mangel Faculty Research Catalyst Fund was designed to assess the impact of nutrition education and the use of monetary support for food purchases on positive dietary behavior changes. This project relied on the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) population, which is characterized as low-income (below 185 percent poverty). All participants were newly enrolled in EFNEP. Three treatment groups were established to compare the effectiveness of classroom education that included the addition of a hands-on grocery store tour, a $25 grocery store gift certificate to aid in the selection and consumption of fresh fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, and basic food resource management skills. The goal of this project was to demonstrate the effectiveness of incorporating grocery store visits into the nutrition education of EFNEP.

**RESULTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment Group</th>
<th>Percent of participants improving at least one nutrition behavior</th>
<th>Percent of participants improving at least one food resource management behavior</th>
<th>Percent of participants who have a positive change in at least one group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment 1</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment 2</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>93.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment 3</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>95.8%</td>
</tr>
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The table above addresses the first three objectives of the project. For Objective 1 and 2, positive behavior change was seen, however, not at the expected rate. There was also no significant difference between treatments. For Objective 3, the number of participants who made a positive behavior change within one or more food groups was well above expected rates for all treatment groups.

Objective 4 indicated that those who received a grocery store tour or a tour and gift card would significantly improve their behavior related to nutrition and food resource management. Overall, we saw little difference between the three treatment groups.

**CONCLUSIONS**

This study shows that regardless of treatment, participants report improvement in dietary choices, however, no significant differences were seen between groups other than the vegetable intake among Treatment 2 participants and grain consumption among Treatment 3 participants. Although further studies are recommended, this study indicates that a monetary gift card incentive does not improve behavior change significantly. This study appears to indicate that classroom education (7 lessons or greater) provides the greatest influence on EFNEP participants. The addition of a grocery store tour and/or a monetary incentive do not significantly impact behavior change.
effectiveness of incorporating of grocery store tours into the nutrition education of EFNEP.

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Improving Classroom Instruction: Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative

Elizabeth Hickman, AMSTI-AU, Auburn University

The Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI) is the Alabama Department of Education’s initiative to improve math and science statewide. A committee comprised of lead K–12 teachers and administrators, higher education representatives, and business leaders designed the program. Its mission is to improve student learning by providing all students with the knowledge and skills needed for success in the workforce and/or postsecondary studies. AMSTI currently serves about 50% of schools in the state. There are 11 sites in the state, each partnered with an institution of higher education. Each site serves the schools in a particular geographic location or region. Sites resemble large warehouses where materials are stored. Additionally, AMSTI sites provide office space for staff and meeting spaces for professional development. Schools apply to become official AMSTI schools and, when accepted, agree to send all of their math and science teachers and administrators to two-week summer institutes for two consecutive summers. Participation is voluntary. Professional development, hands-on materials, and on-site support are three key services provided to schools. Professional learning teams are another dimension of support being developed. Team members learn about leadership and will be key in promoting and sustaining change in instruction throughout the schools. AMSTI also includes a pre-service component for elementary education majors at partner institutions of higher education. A three-year longitudinal study showed AMSTI had statistically significant positive effects on student learning in math, science, and reading. AMSTI is gaining national and international recognition as the most comprehensive math and science initiative in the nation.
Partnering with Local Communities with Innovative Strategies to Enhance Rural Mental Health

Chao-Hui (Sylvia) Huang, Latrice Vinson, Susan Guin, and Martha Crowther
Department of Psychology and Department of Community and Rural Medicine, The University of Alabama

Research shows many mental health disparities in rural communities. Rural residents are at-risk for depression, suicide, and substance abuse. The West Alabama Mobile Unit project aims to enhance engaged scholarship and establish a community/university partnership in Alabama’s Black Belt region to deliver accessible, innovative, and quality mental health care for rural residents.

Method. Collaborations were established between The University of Alabama, the West Alabama Mental Health Center, and local community agencies in Alabama’s Black Belt region. An innovative approach to enhance rural mental health was developed through engaged scholarship by forming an interdisciplinary health care team to deliver mental health services using a mobile unit. Faculty and students from departments of psychology, social work, nursing, rural medicine, and communication participated in service delivery and proactively cultivated a reciprocal partnership with West Alabama rural communities.

Results. With the partnerships from local community agencies, the interdisciplinary team has successfully conducted mental and physical health screens to 2056 residents via mobile unit services in six Black Belt communities. The community partners contributed to the anti-stigma campaign by assisting with recruitment and providing resources. Strategies to overcome barriers and to engage rural residents in mental health services include: 1) collaborating with persons of and from the community in developing interventions, support groups, and outreach efforts, 2) understanding and respecting community-based-based values and...
cultures, 3) providing year-round services to rural communities to build up service stability and trust, 4) making services accessible and affordable, and 5) assuring confidentiality.

Conclusion. Engaged scholarship provides valuable training opportunities for faculty and students to serve rural communities. Using innovative strategies such as partnering with local community agencies in rural Alabama to deliver mobile healthcare is crucial to enhance mental health for the rural population.

Voice Matters: Lessons Learned from Women in a Historically Marginalized Community About the Importance of Engaging Community As Research Partners

Michelle Laws, Department of Social and Behavioral Health, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine

Despite decades of research, health education, promotion campaigns, and behavioral interventions targeted at improving the disparate health outcomes in the Black community, Black women (and men) continue to share a disproportionate burden of disease and deaths. Researchers have found compelling evidence that social determinants are critical factors contributing to the persistence of health disparities in African American communities (Braveman, 2012; Braveman, Egerter, & Mockenhaupt, 2011; David, R., & Messer, L; Hayward, Miles, Crimmins, & Yang, 2000).

Population-level determinants such as social networks, core geographic areas, segregation, health care provision, under or no insurance, socioeconomics and poverty, and correctional experiences are interrelated and seem to play an important role in health disparities (Barrow, Newman, & Douglas, 2008; Secretary’s Advisory Committee on National Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Objectives for Healthy People 2020, 2010).

However, all too often health interventions and research studies are designed without the input of the populations they are designed to treat or help. This seems especially true when the poor are the research subjects. This exclusion of the target population at the front end of the research process often lead to ineffective interventions that show little or no effect in terms of creating positive change in health behaviors and health status. Further, with a specific focus on using service learning to engage students in communities that are fertile with research opportunities, there is a need to better understand how to connect students with community partners and stakeholders in a way that promotes mutual respect and symbiotic learning experiences. Cruz & Giles (2000) (in Stoecker & Tryon, 2009) argue: “There are claims of the positive impact that service learning has on communities, but as we find, there is much less research to back up those claims.” Using service learning as a primary step in a community-engaged research project can help to close the gaps in the literature. The research questions this study seeks to answer are:

1) How can service learning benefit community-engaged research? 2) Can a community engaged approach be effectively carried out in a semester-long service learning class? 3) What are the challenges and rewards of a community collaborative approach for a student? 4) What are the challenges and rewards when community partners are engaged in the research process through a service learning project?

Results from this research include the development and administration of community women’s health and needs survey, which was created in collaboration with women in the community and the student researcher; based on preliminary analysis of survey data (n=35 African American women, aged 18 and older) common themes emerged from question about most pressing health needs of women including need for STD prevention and birth control/pregnancy prevention; established partnership with public health and public housing officials who expressed interest in using findings to inform development of health services for women in community; and the student used service learning project as background to write grant to launch larger-
scale, IRB-approved research study on women’s health needs and barriers to health services (study currently underway). The challenges included time constraints (e.g. balancing research and course work); unexpected changes in terms of stakeholders (lead community outreach worker who played vital role helping researcher to gain access to women left her position with the lead community agency); and the burdens in terms of feeling overwhelmed and helpless by confronting the multiple social and health disparities and needs many women endure living in historically marginalized communities.

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Virginia Commonwealth University

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Background
Despite decades of research, health education, prevention campaigns, and behavioral interventions geared at improving the disparate health outcomes experienced by women and women of color, the disparities remain. This study aimed to address this gap by conducting an IRB-approved research study on women's health needs and barriers to health services (study currently underway). The challenges included time constraints (e.g. balancing research and course work); unexpected changes in terms of stakeholders (lead community outreach worker who played vital role helping researcher to gain access to women left her position with the lead community agency); and the burdens in terms of feeling overwhelmed and helpless by confronting the multiple social and health disparities and needs many women endure living in historically marginalized communities.

The Process
University Partner

There are clear patterns of women’s health needs and barriers to health services (study currently underway). The challenges included time constraints (e.g. balancing research and course work); unexpected changes in terms of stakeholders (lead community outreach worker who played vital role helping researcher to gain access to women left her position with the lead community agency); and the burdens in terms of feeling overwhelmed and helpless by confronting the multiple social and health disparities and needs many women endure living in historically marginalized communities.

Research Questions
1. How can service learning benefit community-engaged research?
2. Can a community-engaged approach be effectively carried out in a service-learning setting in the current context?
3. What are the challenges and rewards of a community collaborative approach to service-learning?
4. What are the challenges and rewards when community partners are engaged in the research process through a service-learning project?

Results

- Development and administration of community women’s health and needs survey
- Identification and retention of community service-learning opportunities
- Student and community engagement

Conclusions

- The use of a community-engaged approach in service-learning can provide valuable insights into community health needs and barriers to health services.
- The study highlights the importance of community collaboration in addressing health disparities.

Figure 1: Women attending VOW (Women of Voice) collaborative meeting to discuss health as part of research learning project.

Virginia Commonwealth University

VCU VCU Voice Matters: Lessons Learned from Women in a Historically Marginalized Community About Importance of Engaging Community As Research Partners

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Long-Term Effects of Service-Learning on Students’ Civic Engagement After College

Shannon O’Brien Wilder, David Berle, and David Knauft, University of Georgia, and Sarah Brackmann, Southwestern University

Abstract

Survey research examines the long-term effects of service-learning participation on civic engagement behaviors and beliefs of students enrolled in a specific service-learning course at one institution from 2004-2011 compared to a similar population of alumni who did not take this service-learning course.

What do we know about the long-term effects of service-learning?

- Overall Learning Outcomes of Service-Learning point to long-term effects (e.g., critical thinking skills, citizenship, personal and interpersonal development, understanding and application of knowledge).
- Little research on long-term effects of SL.

Some previous studies point to...

- Positive effects on civic engagement
- Positive effects on career development in service-related careers

Purpose

- How does participation in Project FOCUS (a UGA service-learning course) effect civic engagement behaviors and beliefs in the years following graduation?
- Is there a difference in civic engagement behaviors and beliefs between university graduates who participated in Project FOCUS and graduates who did not?

Study Framework

Astin and Vogelgesang (2003) studied the effects of service-learning on post-graduation civic beliefs and behaviors, specifically studying:

- Community/civic engagement: civic leadership, working with communities, volunteerism, charitable giving and involvement with alma mater
- Political engagement: general political engagement and its four subfactors: political activism, opinion expression, commitment to political/social change, and voting behavior
- Civic values/goals: pluralistic orientation, self-efficacy, and the goal of promoting social understanding

Their national sample could not control for different teaching styles, reflection strategies, service experiences, and conceptions of service-learning. Studying FOCUS graduates controls for these variables.

Project FOCUS Course Overview

AESC(CID) 40905/90205 - FOCUS (Fostering Our Community’s Understanding of Science): Service-Learning Experience

- 3 hour (A-F graded) course created in Fall 2002 in College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences
- Elective course open to all UGA students with at least 12 hours of college science (actual avg. 30 hours) and 2.5 GPA (actual avg. 3.47 GPA)

Course Goals

- Expose children to science through interactive and hands-on lessons.
- Provide support to K-5 teachers to enhance science instruction.
- Create opportunities for university students to interact with teachers and children in the local community.

Evidence of service-learning’s impact on civic and community engagement behaviors is generally restricted to short-term evaluations of student learning outcomes (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000). While previous studies have examined the effects of service-learning and volunteerism on students’ civic behaviors after college (Astin et al., 1999; Fenzel & Peyrot, 2005; Warchal & Ruiz 2004), few compare results with alumni who did not participate in service-learning.

Survey Instrument

Our survey instrument is based on the Higher Education Research Institute’s (HERI) Life After College Survey: A Survey of Former Undergraduates (LAC), and modified to capture the data needed for our study. LAC was developed in 2003 to study post-graduate values, opinions, and activities. Developed by UCLA’s Higher Education Research Institute and reviewed by a working group of service-learning experts, the survey was designed to “gain a deeper understanding of the various ways in which young adults are involved in their communities approximately six years after graduation” (Astin et al., 2006).

Methodology

Sample Selection
- All graduates who enrolled in Project FOCUS from 2004-2011
- n=475

Comparison Group
- Sample of alumni who graduated with similar majors as the Project FOCUS sample, and who graduated during the same time period

Data Collection & Survey Administration
- Administered using the Qualtrics survey research suite
- 187 alumni finished the survey (87-FOCUS Sample, 100-Control Sample)
- 23% response rate from Project FOCUS alumni

Results

FOCUS alumni compared to other UGA alumni were significantly more likely to:
- Continue with civic and community engagement activities after graduation (e.g., volunteering, serving in community leadership roles, and working on community projects.)
- Attend alumni events
- Use the alumni association for professional and social support
- Recruit others to attend UGA
- Donate money to an educational organization

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(Astin et al., 2006), and no available studies control for consistently defined and implemented service-learning experiences. In this study, survey research examines the long-term effects of service-learning participation on civic engagement behaviors and beliefs of students enrolled in a specific service-learning course at one institution from 2004-2011 compared to a similar population of alumni who did not take a service-learning course.

In 2002, a course entitled “Project FOCUS – Fostering Our Community’s Understanding of Science: Service-Learning Experience” was created at the University of Georgia in collaboration with the local public school system. Each semester, university science students and elementary school teachers are partnered to enhance science education in grades K-5. This study of Project FOCUS and a comparison group of alumni builds on Astin et al.’s (2006) study of a national sample of alumni who participated in service-learning experiences during college. Civic leadership, charitable giving, and overall political engagement were all identified as being more common among individuals who had participated in service-learning compared to those who had not. However, Astin et al.’s (2006) national sample could not control for different teaching styles, reflection strategies, service experiences, definitions of service-learning, and service-learning course design. Since its inception, Project FOCUS has had the same structure, syllabus, reflective journal requirements, service requirements, and community partners, allowing researchers to control for these variables.

Participants in this study included all students who enrolled in Project FOCUS from 2004-2011 (475 alumni). The comparison group of alumni graduated with comparable majors during the same time period (2000 alumni), 187 alumni completed the survey; 87 of these respondents were FOCUS alumni (a 23% response rate), while 100 were from the comparison group.

Results indicate that after graduation, individuals who participated in Project FOCUS were more likely to continue involvement with community and civic engagement activities. FOCUS students reported greater participation in all survey categories measuring work with communities and volunteer activities, including working on community projects, assisting in solving community problems, and serving in leadership roles. Participants also reported stronger affinity to their alma mater as a result of the experience. They were significantly more likely to attend alumni events, use an alumni association for professional and social support, and recruit others to attend their alma mater. They were also more likely to donate money to an educational organization. Study results provide valuable evidence to support claims of significant long-term civic benefits resulting from service-learning experiences. Results also have implications for how higher education institutions view and support service-learning experiences in order to cultivate long-lasting relationships with alumni.

References


NOSC 2012
MAGRATH WINNERS

At NOSC 2012, initiatives by East Carolina University (ECU), Miami University (Ohio), Colorado State University (CSU), and North Carolina A&T State University were named regional recipients of the 2012 Outreach Scholarship W.K. Kellogg Foundation Engagement Award.

In the South Region, ECU’s Intergenerational Community Center was the ultimate 2012 recipient of the C. Peter Magrath University/Community Engagement Award for creating a dynamic community center that meets the urgent needs of the underserved community of West Greenville, N.C. ECU’s project, the Lucille W. Gorham Intergenerational Community Center, received the $20,000 award and trophy during the 125th APLU Annual Meeting in Denver in November 2012.

Established in 2006, the Outreach Scholarship and Magrath University Community Engagement Awards recognize four-year public universities that have redesigned their learning, discovery, and engagement functions to become more deeply involved with their communities.

Award finalists come from four regions—South, North Central, West, and the 1890 university community (historically black land-grants). Each received a cash prize of $6,000.

“These four projects exemplify the broad principles of outreach and engagement with the community and surrounding region embraced today by the public university community,” said APLU President Peter McPherson. “We salute these outstanding initiatives that stand as model engagement programs for colleges and universities nationwide.”

The national winner this year, from the South region, provides a comprehensive community-based system of services to residents of Greenville, N.C. that address a wide range of needs, including: educational programs, parenting classes, and helping juvenile offenders return to the community. The center is used for community meetings, strategic planning, and community-based research. Some of the key programs making a difference at the center include prevention and intervention in gang involvement; providing substance abuse counseling; and assistance with domestic violence, criminal activity, grief, racial disparities, and unemployment. The center also provides job training and apprenticeships, social activities, health screenings, and a variety of programs for all ages. The center is a partnership between ECU, the City of Greenville, Pitt Community College, and other community organizations. Kerry Littlewood is the center’s executive director.

Miami University received the North Central region award for its Center for Community Engagement’s Over-the-Rhine Residency Program. Twelve students integrate academics with a full immersion experience to live and work in the “school of social life” for a full semester in the Cincinnati neighborhood of Over-the-Rhine. Each week students perform 15 hours of service at one or more nonprofit organizations within the community, including medical clinics, affordable housing developers, schools, homeless shelters, and advocacy groups. The center’s firm conviction is that learning in support of broader community transformation is best served by direct social engagement that generates learning and knowledge based upon social participation within a cultural community of color.

The West Region Award went to CSU Crowdsourcing, Climate Change and Student Science: The Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network won the West region award. In less than 10 years, this award-winning program has grown from one local community project to a nationwide crowdsourcing program engaging over 15,000 participants. Students of all ages at over 100 schools perform research, analyze data, and become future innovators for environmental and social issues. The resulting index of rain, hail, and snow measurements is publicly available at www.cocorahs.org. Its unique approach to data collection and research has made it one of the most innovative citizen science programs in the nation.

The 1890 region award was given to North Carolina A&T State University in partnership with North Carolina State University for Building a Sustainable Local Food Economy in North Carolina through Partnership and Engagement. The Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS), along with the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Sciences found itself in the middle of a brewing crisis between agricultural and environmental groups demanding land-grant universities do more to help protect fish and waterways from hog containment facility spills. CEFS partnered with the groups to find positive ways to alleviate conflicts and tackle the emerging environmental issues. The partnership led to the creation of NC Choices, which promotes the advancement of local, niche, and pasture-based meat supply chains by facilitating educational and networking experiences for producers, processors, food professional and buyers. The project has built trust and laid the groundwork for future cooperation between the universities and engaged diverse partners, including the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association, the North Carolina Farm Bureau, the Environmental Defense Fund, and many others. The partnership has since expanded to include hundreds of nonprofit organizations, businesses, associations, and state agencies. In addition to the regional winners, the following projects were deemed exemplary and worthy of recognition:

- South Region. Shoulder to Shoulder Global: Improving the Health and Well-Being of Resource-Poor Communities in Ecuador, University of Kentucky. Knoxville Homeless Management Information System.
- North Central Region. Green Energy
Technologies, Michigan State University. Community Economic and Entrepreneurial Development Program, University of Missouri.

- **West Region.** Living with Fire, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension. Lionel Hampton International Jazz Festival Mentors and Masters: Partners Shaping Tomorrow, University of Idaho. Sustainable City Year Program, University of Oregon.
JCES invites submission of book reviews that speak to a wide range of issues relevant to the scholarship of engagement. Reviews of books within the social sciences, natural sciences and math, medicine and health, the environment, law, business, philosophy, religion, and the arts and humanities are encouraged. Although reviews of individual books are the most common, JCES also invites submission of several reviews that speak to a particular topic area, to be published as a group. All book reviews submitted to JCES should provide readers with a broad overview of the book, but should go beyond this description to discuss central issues raised, strengths and limitations of the text, and current issues of theory and practice raised by the book that are germane to the subject matter and engaged scholarship.

Heather Pleasants, Ph.D.
Book Review Editor
During the last half of the 20th century substantive changes in higher education provide strong support for Etkowitz’s (2008) contention that we are in the midst of a second academic revolution. While Etkowitz concentrates on the slow but directional interconnection of university-industry-government, which he models as a Triple Helix, a more public and contentious transformation involving civil society is evolving, a movement with various descriptive titles, most generically known as community engagement scholarship (CES) (Fitzgerald & Simon, 2012). Jointly, the Triple Helix and CES transformations have propelled research universities to the fore with respect to their collective responsibility for sparking regional and national innovation. An explicit assumption is that innovation will foster economic and social development to support a thriving knowledge-society constructed on the backbone of a knowledge-based economy with renewed attention to remediating poverty and advancing social justice. While universities in North America and the European Union are at various stages of organizational transformation (Cox, 2010; Powell, 2010), the extraordinary growth of university-community partnerships now cuts across nearly every discipline and every societal domain (Fitzgerald, in press). As Nyden and Percy (2010) note, “The engagement interface is a dynamic, evolving and co-constructed space—a cooperative community of inquiry—where partners work together with activist orientation to seek transformative ends for both the community and the academic setting” (p. 312). The Triple Helix-CES duo moves university-community partnerships beyond simple technology and knowledge transfer, and enters a realm of innovation, risk taking, and evidence-based practices that advances knowledge and simultaneously produces solution-focused applications. It moves beyond the tired contrast of basic and applied research (Stokes, 1997) as the dominant methodology for all natural and social sciences engaged in university-community partnerships.

It is within this collage of transformational change that David Cooper carefully and thoroughly crafts a prescription for transforming South Africa’s system of higher education, positioning it to provide leadership for the emergence of a knowledge economy and a knowledge society. *University in Development* is not for the faint-hearted or for the quick read-on-the-beach crowd. It is a provocative, deeply intertwined pathway, guided by historical sociology, through 20th century transformations in higher education, international models of institutional research organization, and the development of hypotheses to guide Cooper’s case study of five universities in the Western Cape of South Africa.

Cooper draws heavily on Etzkowitz’s (2008) contention that during the 1970s a third transformation in higher education began taking shape through a Triple Helix of higher education, industry, and government. In contrast to U.S. President Dwight David Eisenhower’s 1960s caution to be wary of the growth of the military-industrial complex, society and international events instead co-opted higher education and laid the groundwork for the emergence of the Triple Helix. Cooper provides the context for what he describes as the creation of a third mission for higher education: namely, to foster a social-economic-cultural transformation of society through a “third capitalist industrial revolution.” Cooper builds his case through the first several chapters, weaving in and out of Etzkowitz’s theories and hypotheses, offering examples of knowledge economy practices in higher education in the United States and the European Union, and to a lesser extent in Japan, China, and Australia. Clearly, in Etzkowitz’s view, higher education’s role in the Triple Helix is to provide the science and technological research necessary to fuel innovation in industry via funding from both government and industry grants and...
contracts. Moreover, universities are to move the needle on science by shifting greater resources to use-inspired basic research (Stokes, 1997). Cooper notes that the rapid and continuing rise of university-based research institutes and centers in the U.S. and EU occurred synergistically with the influence of the Triple Helix on higher education. The open question is to what extent have South Africa’s investments provided the strategic grist to refine its higher education system to position it for leadership in the development of a knowledge society and economy. Specifically, Cooper queries, “What are the major enhancing and inhibiting factors affecting university research centres and units of the Western Cape, in relation to their fulfillment of use-oriented research for wider societal constituencies?”(p. 25). He argues that South Africa’s system of higher education seems to have embraced well the U-I dyad within the Triple Helix, but that industry was clearly dominant over government. Cooper calls for a much more equitable role for government investment in higher education’s research and development in order to balance the Triple Helix.

However, not content with polemical pot-shooting, Cooper designed a rigorous longitudinal case study to gather direct information on the status of five Western Cape universities apropos of their organizational structures in support of research. Three universities are traditional liberal arts research universities and two are technology universities. Interviews were conducted in 2000, 2005, and 2007 in order to capture evidence of change in institutional research infrastructure that may reflect alignment signaling emergence of Triple Helix models.

Cooper develops and describes in considerable detail, four model approaches to organizing research in higher education. He describes then rejects the “curiosity” focused traditional model (T) comprised of an individual teacher-researcher and her/his graduate students working on issues related to disciplinary driven questions. While such research clearly contributes to knowledge generation, and represents a tenaciously durable approach to research, its translation to practical solutions for societal problems ordinarily follows a linear pathway from basic research to applied research to production, if it ever is actually launched onto that pathway. Three alternate models, A, B, and C, are advocated as structures that will accelerate innovation and, guided by use-inspired basic research, will simultaneously contribute to knowledge production as well as evidence-based application. Model A (Real Research Center) is seen as fully aligned with the Triple Helix, hierarchically organized with a director, functionally a CEO, with a critical mass of senior researchers, post-doctoral fellows, and graduate students with infrastructure staff and resource support. Cooper’s analysis of case study data concluded that such centers in the Western Cape sample were difficult to sustain, despite evidence that Model A organizations in North America and the European Union are highly successful. Model B (New Real Unit) research units are led by a professor with post-doctoral and graduate students who are in partnership with external stakeholders in order to achieve a shared set of outcomes. Case study data provided support for the effectiveness of this approach for university-community partnership growth. Model C (Virtual Centers) centers are networks of researchers and various subgroups who are drawn together by shared interests and experience few barriers to their spontaneous interdisciplinary efforts to jointly examine multi-faceted problems. These centers fared better with respect to productivity, but still seem to have suffered from the heavy reliance on U-I relations, without counterbalancing investments by government to shore up the U-I linkage within the Triple Helix.

Cooper’s case study approach found little evidence for what he refers to as “innovation anxiety” among interviewees. Innovation anxiety seems to refer to a deep cultural and individual sense that innovation is the key to creating a knowledge society and that it is the essential glue that binds the university-industry-government triad. Although Cooper found that researchers understood the value of university-industry partnerships, the value was not accompanied by a sense that the university was an essential partner for developing industry and accelerating it toward a knowledge society. Moreover, they apparently engaged in little deep conversation about the role of South Africa’s higher education system with respect to creating regional innovation systems motivated by Triple Helix models. In short, he found little evidence that universities were driven by innovation anxiety and therefore did not particularly see themselves as critical players in the Triple Helix with respect to economic innovation and development in the Western Cape.

Etzkowitz (2008) embeds the Triple Helix in a “flourishing civil society” that fuels the “emergence of diverse sources of innovation,” and provides the dynamic force for sparking innovation for forming

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a “meta-innovation system.” But for Etzkowitz, civil society is akin to an external perturbation that simulates initiative and change within the Triple Helix but is not part of the system dynamics of the Triple-Helix itself. In contrast, influenced by the CES movement in higher education, Cooper argues that extending the new entrepreneurial university from its anchor in technology and industry to the activities and objectives of civil society requires a fully integrated Quad Helix of university-industry-government-civil society so that innovation, economic growth, and societal change are part of a common discourse in which all elements of complex systems are working toward alignment and thereby optimizing sustainability. Cooper brings into focus the critical importance of including the knowledge and voices of people from outside universities, government, and industry if a knowledge society is to take root, and points to the scale of this challenge, particularly in countries where large numbers of people are poor and work outside the economy of large and medium enterprises (pp. 111–115). Indeed as Silka (1999) points out about the dynamic relationships in networks and partnerships, the dynamic process “involves learning to see things in terms of something else in order to overcome differences and arrive at a shared plan of action.”(p. 353).

In The University in Development, David Cooper challenges the higher education system of the Western Cape and South Africa to see things differently and develop a shared plan of action by building a Quad Helix network designed to expand use-inspired basic research and construct a knowledge economy that fully embraces the cultural and historical character of South Africa and creates a knowledge society for all of its citizens. Moreover, he challenges higher education to step forward and create the 21st century infrastructure and reward system that will unleash faculty and student innovations for positive change. His message is one that resonates far beyond the borders of South Africa.

References


About the Reviewers

Hiram E. Fitzgerald is associate provost for University Outreach and Engagement and University Distinguished Professor of Psychology at Michigan State University. He is president of the Engagement Scholarship Consortium, chair of the Committee on Institutional Cooperation’s Committee on Engagement, and a member of the Board of Directors of the Academy of Community Engagement Scholarship. He is a fellow of both the American Psychological Association and the Association of Psychological Science.

Burton A. Bargerstock is director of the National Collaborative for the Study of University Engagement and director of Communication and Information Technology within University Outreach and Engagement at Michigan State University.
The essays in Katharyne Mitchell’s *Practising Public Scholarship* are fundamentally autobiographical narratives of transformation. The contributors, including Terry Eagleton, Julie Ellison, Paul Ehrlich, and Howard Zinn, trace their evolution from academics, scholars, and intellectuals to public academics, public scholars, and public intellectuals. The emphasis is clear in Mitchell’s title.

A suspect term in some academic circles, public is nevertheless the defining identity for these writers and researchers. What that means for them individually may begin in such obvious activities as writing op-eds, participating in social protests, and the rather mundane activities of copyediting posters and press releases designed to communicate activism of one kind or another. However, these personal forays into public nudge the contributors to think deeply about their responsibilities to their institution, their students, and their communities. What happened to make them susceptible or compelled to begin the journey ranges from an upbringing that valued education to personal participation in politics to reading and reflecting on a seminal text. These paths are both deliberate and accidental. Limerick notes, “Career-wise, improbability and adventure have become my norm” (11). Most of the contributors would concur.

And that is part of the allure—a chance to make scholarship relevant to problems and challenges and to apply it to the search for solutions. Mitchell notes in her introduction: “My sense is that what creates a public scholar is related to a profound urge to participate and intervene in the political practices of the world—to fight injustice or correct information or provide a needed service—in short, to try to make the world a better place, corny as that sounds” (2).

Corny, maybe, but also compelling when, as Eagleton writes, public intellectuals “find some way of bringing their particular academic expertise to bear on a matter of public importance” (7).

Mitchell’s contributors speak to the challenges of becoming public: how to make engagement a platform for scholarship, how to craft a language that reflects scholarship but translates clearly to public audiences, how to negotiate resistance within the academy (including issues of tenure and promotion). The latter, succinctly stated by Mitchell as the challenge of “becoming a public scholar and… intervening politically in the world, while remaining within a university system” (p. 4, author’s emphasis) is no small matter.

Of course, the contributors to *Practising Public Scholarship* are the ones who survived and thrived. Their disciplines span sociology, English, women’s studies, geography, and environmental sciences, among others. While their experiences may be discipline-specific, their wisdom is universal. Practical advice includes strategic career choices that make the journey easier. Dennis Raphael suggests choosing “an academic discipline that allows incorporation of the political into academic inquiry” (p. 64). Limerick takes it further: “Apply, to the world around you, the methods they taught you in graduate school for assessing evidence… keep your hypotheses in a limber and flexible state… resist the common human habit of celebrating the evidence that supports your pre-existing point of view, while dismissing the evidence that invites...
you to question your original assumptions” (p. 16).

Ultimately, each of the contributors would like to encourage the next generation to make the leap, primarily because, as Limerick states: “I cannot shake the idea, composed of equal parts gloom and cheer, that the minds of faculty and students are the most under-utilized renewable resources in the United States today” (p. 15). In the end, this is the audience for Practising Public Scholarship. If, as O’Donnell notes, “the most difficult task remains developing enduring student and institutional commitment” (p. 72), it is crucial that established and emerging public scholars begin and continue to produce and promote academically respected, publicly accessible scholarship that makes a difference in the world. Practising Public Scholarship is a road map for that journey.

About the Reviewer

Jay Lamar is director of Special Programs, Office of the Provost, Undergraduate Studies, Auburn University. She is a member of the JCES editorial board.

The Heart Is As Important As the Mind for Higher Education Renewal

Reviewed by Megan A. Scanlon


In Villa Incognita, Tom Robbins writes:

It doesn’t matter how sensitive you are or how damn smart and educated you are, if you’re not both at the same time, if your heart and your brain aren’t connected, aren’t working together harmoniously, well, you’re just hopping through life on one leg. You may think you’re walking, you may think you’re running a damn marathon, but you’re only on a hop trip. The connection’s got to be maintained (p. 104).

The Heart of Higher Education: A Call to Renewal: Transforming the Academy through Collegial Conversations dedicates itself to maintaining this connection by asking if “current education efforts address the whole human being—mind, heart, and spirit—in ways that best contribute to our future on this fragile planet?” Authors Parker Palmer and Arthur Zajonc explore the steps colleges and universities can take to experience a mind, heart, and spirit connection, while questioning the “imagined, habitual, or real barriers preventing our educational communities from actualizing meaningful dialogues around spirit, purpose, and transformation” (p. vii).

The book emerged from a series of conversations; the authors felt something was missing in higher education, namely, integrative education. “Integration has been an enduring goal in education for a long time. In the cathedral schools of twelfth century Europe, the Seven Liberal Arts were…intended to produce the ‘good and perfect man’” (p. 7). As a philosophy and practice, it is influenced by individuals such as the Dalai Lama, who maintains, “Education can guide, but the heart must lead” (p. 163), as well as mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, physicist Albert Einstein, and poet Rainer Maria Rilke, who said, “Do not search now for the answers, which could not be given to you because you would not be able to live them. It is
a matter of living everything” (p. 105). Thus, the authors champion that integrative education...begins with the premise that we are embedded in a communal reality and then proceeds to an epistemological assertion: we cannot know this communal reality truly and well unless we ourselves are consciously and actively in community with it as knowers (p. 27).

Man of letters Horace Walpole wrote, “This world is a comedy to those that think, a tragedy to those that feel” (Cunningham, 2012, p. 366). Consequently, the reviewer’s mentor once told her that it’s a sign of intelligence to hold two competing and contradictory ideas and still function. Heart demonstrates its intelligence in thinking and feeling by acknowledging the inherent disorder embedded in any institution (and in life) with stories of those who have found their own rhythm; those who recognize the power of higher education and take “thoughtful risks” about what is worth trying. In this way others may be able to heighten awareness of their own unique rhythm. Indeed Heart does warn that “disengaged forms of learning are likely to lead learners toward disengaged lives” (p. 31). A divided academic life runs the risk of unprecedented levels of apathy and detachment, dangerous in that an isolationist attitude hampers efforts to collectively solve the most pressing needs of our time. Yet, the authors’ intentions are not to set boundaries on integrative education by defining it; rather the book is an invitation for lively and meaningful conversation about transformative education, as:

...one of the virtues of conversation, as opposed to declaration, is that you do not need a precise definition to make headway: the nuances of a good conversation allow you to probe complex problems without reducing them to single dimensions or sound bites (p. 6–7).

Heart bestows powerful and motivating examples about optimizing the higher education experience. The authors uphold that we in higher education can make conscious decisions to reinforce the value of human relationships, engage in meaningful, holistic ways, focus on collaboration, and illuminate our interconnectedness. When applied, this rhetoric arguably influences positive internalized behaviors. It promotes spaces for empathy and generosity, and cultivates an attitude of empowerment and ownership.

Palmer and Zajonc maintain:

The change we seek within the academy is not one that flows from administrative mandate, but one that arises in the energized space between caring and thoughtful human beings. When personal agendas subside, and genuine interest in the other is established, than a quality of mutual attentiveness emerges that can become the safe harbor for the new and the unexpected that may become a seedbed of educational renewal (p. 12).

Heart embodies these energized spaces between caring and thoughtful human beings by facilitating to the reader a sense of hospitality and openness:

Learning spaces need to be hospitable spaces not merely because kindness is a good idea but because real education requires rigor. In a counterintuitive way, hospitality supports rigor by supporting community, and the proof can be found in everyday classroom experience (p. 29).

Heart challenges the reader to consider how we know what we know; are we objective, subjective, or both, and how does what we think we know affect how we approach the world and each other? Heart acknowledges the dance between objectivity and subjectivity, but in an interview about subjectivity in journalism, the late journalist Tim Hetherington arguably said it best:

All journalists should realize that true objectivity is impossible and therefore what I am always looking for in my work is this relationship between subjectivity and objectivity, for me the work is the mixture of the two, but I think its slightly weighted to what is outside of myself, and I put the weight on that thing because I think we all share this planet and that we have to work out strategies—I have to work out strategies to communicate to you, because I share this planet with you, and it’s important that we don’t just look at the world through a subjective nihilist lens that we try and look at the world through a kind of objective lens.
because we have to share it (http://vimeo.com/19959885).

We DO share this planet, and insight into what shapes an individual’s worldview is a tool to inform behavior and actions, and there is nothing more tangible than how behaviors and actions affect lives. This is exemplified in Palmer’s example in learning about the Holocaust. He felt that he learned about it in an “academically antiseptic way, at objectivist’s arm’s length.” Survivors weren’t invited to class, personal stories weren’t ever told, films of Holocaust monstrosities never viewed. He felt the material was taught dispassionately, as if “these things had happened to some other species on some other planet” (p. 32). Thus, to the critics who say emotions have no place in the classroom, Heart replies:

Academics who want to factor out “subjective emotions” in favor of data-based “objective knowledge” will, at the same time, blithely ignore fifty years of research about the importance of attending to emotions if we want to liberate the mind (p. 42).

Furthermore, in Chapter 1, Palmer promptly addresses the critics of integrative education, not wanting to flee from criticism, an action he considers, “one of the saddest and most self contradictory features of academic culture” (p. 23). Other critiques include: Integrative education is too messy; academics and spirituality don’t mix; and its philosophical foundations are weak. Palmer essentially agrees with the latter, not in that philosophical underpinnings cannot be “mounted,” but because:

Many of us have not done our homework on these issues in a way that allows us to engage our critics in a constructive dialogue…. (O)ur challenge is to become more conversant with these things and more articulate about them, in dialogue with the critics (p. 24).

Heart in its entirety rises to this challenge, specifically through the excellent, applicable, and moving accounts given in the appendix. For instance, Dennis Huffman, a program supervisor at Prince George’s Community College, connects professors (more than two-thirds are part-time) using the power of poetry. To convey his gratitude to the faculty and enliven their community, Huffman delivered weekly poems with messages of thanks in the faculty mailboxes. A turning point in his self-conscious, unsure effort came when “A gruff old math teacher getting off the elevator... snerled, ‘Hey! Where’s my poem? I really needed it this week.’” (p. 206).

Heart selected instructive appendix examples to combat barriers such as being lost in a crowd at a big school. The story of Jon Dalton, former VP of Student Affairs at Florida State, speaks to the power of consistency. To make a large school accessible and more personal, Dalton set up a table every Wednesday at the school’s flea market. Wondering what a guy in a suit was up to, students eventually began to say hello, ask for advice, give advice, invite him to parties, etc. Anything he couldn’t respond to himself was generally quickly resolved with a phone call to another department. “Always, always they were grateful that I listened and tried to help…. I observed how this symbolic act helped to create a more positive student culture. I never tried to measure the impact scientifically; I didn’t have to” (p. 197).

In Cannery Row, John Steinbeck (1945) writes:

It has always seemed strange to me.... The things we admire in men, kindness and generosity, openness, honesty, understanding and feeling, are the concomitants of failure in our system. And those traits we detest, sharpness, greed, acquisitiveness, meanness, egotism and self-interest, are the traits of success. And while men admire the quality of the first they love the produce of the second (p. 164).

Heart accounts for Steinbeck’s traits of success and shares wonderful examples of “the concomitants of failure”: building community, illuminating the things we admire in others, and a generosity of spirit.

In a New York Times op-ed about biking accessibility in New York City, musician David Byrne says:

I got hooked on biking because it’s a pleasure, not because biking lowers my carbon footprint, improves my health or brings me into contact with different parts of the city and new adventures.
In Their Own Perspectives: Not-For-Profit Staff Perspectives of Collaborations Between the Community and the Academy

Reviewed by Neivin M. Shalabi


The central goal of Randy Stoecker and Elizabeth Tryon’s The Unheard Voices: Community Organizations and Service Learning is to amplify the voices of community partners, thus addressing the neglect of community impact and perception of service-learning. The book chapters are based on qualitative data collected from 67 not-for-profit professionals by students in a community-based research seminar at the University of Wisconsin. In addition to a preface and an epilogue, Unheard Voices is organized into 10 chapters.

The first chapter briefly reviews pertinent literature, highlighting bias toward student outcomes; the paucity of research on the community side of service-learning; and limitations of previous studies on community perspectives mainly as lacking sufficient depth. The second chapter begins by discussing the meager resources of the majority of not-for-profits, but moves quickly beyond that to argue that the motives of not-for-profit professionals are complex and go beyond their desires to serve the needs of their organizations and those of their clients to benefit society at large. The authors classify the motivations of community organizations for hosting service-learners into four categories: an altruistic motive to educate service-learners, a long-term motive for the sector and the organization, the capacity-building motive, and the higher education relationship motive.

The next chapters—three to eight—highlight several issues associated with service-learning for partnering organizations. Among these issues is the challenge of finding a good match between the organization and students; the authors revealed how the location of not-for-profits—away from campus or in rural areas—may constrain their recruitment of service-learners. The issue of short-term service-learning also emerged as a daunting challenge facing community-based organizations that accept service-learners. For example, the authors explained how the short duration of service neither justifies the time organizations invest in preparing students nor yields adequate benefits for communities, and in the spaces we inhabit.

References

About the Reviewer
Megan A. Scanlon is an enrollment advisor at the American University of Beirut based in the New York office.
students and organizations. The authors proposed ideas for getting the most out of short-term service-learning and moving it into longer and sustained collaborations with universities.

Evaluating service-learners surfaced as another important issue facing community-based organizations. The authors discussed agency professionals’ concerns about the extent to which, if at all, their input affected students’ grades and the differences between their goals of evaluating service-learners and those of the academy, noting that while the university focuses on assessing student learning, community professionals are concerned with assessing student performance based on the set of skills and competencies service-learners bring to their organizations.

In addition to discussing the issues of good fit and evaluation, the authors pinpointed the concept of diversity as it relates to service-learning, highlighting the demographic differences between service-learners and the clients in that the first usually come from privileged racial and class backgrounds while the latter typically come from historically disadvantaged groups. The authors stressed the value of diversity as essential to building a cohesive and empowered community. Significantly, the authors discussed diversity beyond demographics, stressing the importance of enhancing students’ cultural competencies through diversity trainings and increasing their exposure to diverse groups. Importantly, they called for intentional efforts to enhance diversity and appreciation for it, noting that overlooking the issue of diversity in service-learning could yield negative impacts for students and communities.

The last two chapters—nine and ten—describe principles of success for service-learning as perceived by not-for-profit professionals. Commitment, communication, and compatibility emerged as the most central principles of success. Commitment refers to the idea of sustaining service-learning relationships between the community and the academy over time. Communication signifies the critical importance of maintaining effective interactions among partnering organizations, students, and faculty members. Compatibility indicates the idea of good fit, meaning that care should be given to ensure that service-learning projects fit the needs of the community and that students’ placements match the organizations’ goals and needs.

While Unheard Voices covers a relatively broad range of issues associated with service-learning from a community perspective, it suffers from a number of limitations. For example, it provides little to no information about participants’ demographics, the characteristics of their not-for-profits, and the exact number of participants who contributed to each topic. The use of visualization, such as summary tables and/or diagrams, with this information would have increased the validity of findings and allowed for an examination of how participants’ backgrounds and their organizations’ types might have shaped their perceptions of service-learning. Likewise, providing more details about data analysis procedures such as coding types and strategies for identifying themes and their rationale would have enhanced the validity of findings. Lastly, incorporating a theoretical framework and a discussion of how researchers’ identities impacted their interpretation of data would have increased the trustworthiness of the information presented in this volume.

Despite the above noted limitations, Unheard Voices is a needed addition to the literature for several reasons. First, it highlights community voice, thus addressing an important gap in service-learning literature. Significantly, it presents a persuasive argument for the importance of caring about the community impact and perception of service-learning through both soliciting community voice and discussing the consequences of overlooking the community side of service-learning. On a related note, the book goes beyond revealing issues facing not-for-profit professionals in their service-learning collaborations with higher education to discussing the significance of each issue and presenting suggestions for handling those issues. Doing so increases the utility and practicality of the book, thus making it appealing to both scholars and practitioners. Second, supporting the discussions with many direct quotes from the participants is a major strength of this volume; the voices of community professionals make the book authentic and interesting. Third, the organization of the book is another merit; the use of headings and sub-headings guides the reader and makes the book reader-friendly. Significantly, by engaging different constituents in authoring this book, Stoecker and Tryon managed to model collaboration among community professionals, students, and faculty members in service-learning.

Unheard Voices contributes to the knowledge base on service-learning in higher education in several ways. First, it is among the pioneering works that focus on community voice and impact of service-learning (e.g., Sandy & Holland, 2006; Worrall, 2007). However, this volume is distinct
Unheard Voices is the significant contribution to service-learning literature that provides profound insights—from the community side—into building effective and democratic service-learning collaborations.
between the community and the academy.

**References**


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**About the Reviewer**

Nevin N. Shalabi is a lecturer at Delta University for Science and Technology in El Mansoura, Egypt.
MANUSCRIPT PREPARATION

Manuscripts for the main section of the journal should be submitted in Microsoft Word with a separate cover page. Manuscripts should be double-spaced in Times New Roman 12-point type. Article length, except in rare instances, should not exceed 25 pages, including text, tables, and references. Tables and other graphics should be submitted as separate documents with their place in the manuscript indicated. Do not include the abstract and cover pages in the page count.


A separate cover sheet with the name(s), affiliation(s), and other identifying information and contact information (address, phone numbers, fax numbers, and email addresses) for each contributing author should be supplied. Additionally, authors should include four to six keywords at the bottom of the cover sheet.

All identifying information or references to the author(s) must be removed from the manuscript. Manuscripts that include identifying information will not be reviewed prior to correction. Each manuscript must also include an abstract of 150 words or less that summarizes the major themes of the manuscript. Manuscripts not meeting these criteria will be returned to the author before being sent out for review.

Authors are required to submit written permission from the original publisher for any quoted material of 300 words or more from a single source; any quoted material from a newspaper, a poem, or a song (even a phrase); and any table, figure, or image reproduced from another work.

Images must also be submitted electronically, in JPEG format, with no less than 200 pixels per inch resolution for black and white images and 300 for color. Manuscripts will undergo masked peer review. It is the intention of this journal to assign manuscripts to reviewers within two to four weeks of compliant and correct submission. Authors will be notified of a decision in a timely manner consistent with thorough scholarly review.

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STUDENT VOICES

Students from all disciplines are invited to submit original work to the Student Voices Section of *JCES*. All forms of writing, analysis, creative approaches, and methodologies are acceptable for the journal. Commentaries, critical reflections, opinion pieces, and scholarly contributions of any kind related to engaged scholarship are welcome.

Student submissions are accepted on an ongoing basis. Manuscripts should be 750–1,000 words in length and must adhere to the requirements in the instructions for authors above. Inquiries and submissions (as a Microsoft Word attachment) should be emailed to Vicky Carter, Assistant to the Editor, at jces@ua.edu. Commentaries, critical reflections, opinion pieces, and scholarly contributions of any kind related to engaged scholarship are welcome.
Community members working with academic partners from all disciplines are invited to submit original work to the Community Voices Section of *JCES*. All forms of writing, analysis, creative approaches, and methodologies are acceptable for the journal. Commentaries, critical reflections, opinion pieces, and scholarly contributions of any kind related to engaged scholarship are welcome.

Community partner submissions are accepted on an ongoing basis. Manuscripts should be 750–2,000 words in length and must adhere to the requirements in the instructions for authors above. Inquiries and submissions (as a Microsoft Word attachment) should be emailed to Vicky Carter, Assistant to the Editor, at jces@ua.edu. Commentaries, critical reflections, opinion pieces, and scholarly contributions of any kind related to engaged scholarship are welcome.

Faculty, students, and community members working with academic partners are invited to submit original work to the From the Field Section of *JCES*. This section is reserved for reports that are more likely to be practice-based or case study-oriented than is the typical theory-driven section. This section provides a venue for research projects involving partnerships between academic institutions, community, and students. Manuscripts that share best practices, practice wisdom, and applied knowledge are especially appropriate for From the Field. Context is also essential as it is for all engaged scholarly activities and reporting From the Field should be situated philosophically, historically, and theoretically if it is to systematically extend our knowledge and understanding. All submissions need to be described and examined through these lenses or some combination of them. Unique partnerships have the potential to make highly interesting pieces for From the Field.

Lessons learned or practice principles should be a part of the manuscript. Research methodologies of all types are accepted, and research projects with strong application and practice implications will be given favorable consideration. From the Field manuscripts should follow *JCES* submission guidelines (see above), but should not exceed 15 pages. If a lead author is uncertain whether to submit a manuscript under any one of the above classifications, send an email to jces.ua.edu for clarification and guidance.
Manuscript Receipt
• scan for style standards; request revisions if necessary
• assign manuscript number
• send acknowledgement email to primary author
• select appropriate reviewers

First Review
• send to reviewers: review request, masked manuscript, review form
• reassign manuscript if reviewers are unable to complete review
• send to reviewers: reminder email one week after requested due date if reviews not yet returned
• send to editor: combined reviewer comments/rating form

Editor Decision
• accept (if accepted, proceed to Step 8)
• recommend revisions; resubmit
• reject (end of process)

Revise and Resubmit Request
• notify primary author of decision
• send to author: letter from editor, document with reviewer comments, manuscript edits and tracked changes
• request resubmission within four weeks

Resubmission and Second Review
• scan for standards (esp. masked copy); if necessary, send author a request for revision
• reassign manuscript to original reviewers
• send to reviewers: masked manuscript, copy of masked letter from editor to primary author, masked document with original reviewer comments, review form, and masked manuscript with track changes/comments from editor
• request return of re-review within two weeks
• send to reviewers: reminder email one week after requested due date if reviews not yet returned
• send to editor: combined reviewer comments/rating form

Editor Decision
• accept (if accepted, proceed to Step 8)
• accept with minor revision

Accept with Minor Revision
• send to primary author: notification of decision, requested revisions to be returned within two weeks
• once revisions received, read thoroughly to ensure completion of all requests
• reject (end of process)

Edit for Publication
• final editing by JCES staff
• negotiate edited manuscript with author
• send official copyright forms for primary author’s signature

Publication
in which community engagement can transform the world. Also included are the abstracts of poster winners at NOSC 2012.

The remaining manuscripts in this issue include reports on engagement research and scholarship that address culturally relevant health promotion in Guatemala, the power of story-telling to build partnerships in a Latino community, the shifting of attitudes towards poverty through service-learning, and the development of classroom exercises and discussion prompts that provide practice strategies for coping with unfamiliar experiences in distant locales. Other manuscripts provide an outline that can assist in sustaining university-community partnerships across multiple disciplines, which promote social justice and a pedagogical tool for educating students about social justice, civic engagement, and personal responsibility for positive social change through the use of garden-based service-learning. Of course, we also include our book reviews, provided by some of the top engaged scholars in the field. Last, I would like to draw your attention to the manuscript entitled, “Catalyst for Democracy? Outcomes and Processes in Community-University Interaction,” by Dr. Tami L. Moore. As one reviewer put it, this manuscript, “boldly steps into a void created by clichéd, non-academic university tendencies to focus narrowly on their economic contributions to stakeholders. This research attempts to reset the agenda and to place the discussion back into the real(ity) of the university’s obligation to foster democracy and the knowledge necessary to understand it.”

As always, I welcome your feedback regarding JCES. We need to hear what we do well and upon what we need to improve. This work could not be done without the hard work of our editorial review board and reviewers. Their work is very much appreciated and the engagement scholarship world is the better for their service. In an effort to reward our reviewers (and in all honesty to also encourage the most thorough and timely reviews), JCES is proud to announce that it will annually select a reviewer of the year. Making the decision of who would be our first Reviewer of the Year was difficult as we are fortunate to have some wonderful reviewers. Yet, we have selected that person and I hope you will all join me in congratulating Dr. Nick Sanyal, JCES board member and associate professor at the University of Idaho. You will be learning more about Nick as he has also graciously accepted our invitation to be the first associate editor of JCES. You’ll hear more about all of that in the next issue of JCES and on our website (www.jces.ua.edu). For now, we encourage you to continue to Partner! Inspire! And Change! as we all (to borrow from the ESC 2013 meeting theme in Lubbock, Texas at Texas Tech University) engage in “Boundary Spanning” to work “Across Disciplines, Communities, and Geography.”


About the Author

Tami L. Moore is an assistant professor of Educational Leadership and program coordinator of Higher Education and Student Affairs at Oklahoma State University.

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Tami L. Moore: Continued from Page 80

Lewis-Clark State College.


