

Framing Question for the Virtual Forum

At the recent annual meeting of the Modern Language Association, there was a lively discussion about creating engaged students and campuses better connected to local communities. Yet engagement was predominantly defined as an expanded service role, to the point where one faculty member claimed that the "servicification of higher education" has the danger of belittling the "production of knowledge." Service work, it was noted, is not acknowledged in institutional reward policies and is thus devalued. This kind of discussion about engagement in higher education is indicative of a looming crisis in the engagement movement as it appears to have either been successfully resisted by the dominant cultures of the academy, successfully accommodated by the dominant cultures of the academy so that it is acknowledged without transforming the institution, or it has – through a long difficult process – been institutionalized in a way that has initiated transformational change of the institution. It has echoes of the a 2004 Wingspread conference on the future of engagement in higher education which reached the conclusion that while the engagement movement has created some change, it has also plateaued and requires a more comprehensive effort to ensure lasting commitment and institutional capacity. If engagement in higher education is to emerge more broadly as a core value of the University of the 21st century – as centrally important to the civic mission of higher education and to producing and transmitting new knowledge - what strategic directions are needed? How can scholarly practice help realize the democratic purpose of higher education? What are the institutional commitments that are needed to fostering a citizen politics among students and among academics?

Strategies for Advancing Civic Engagement

These forums on strategies to deepen the democratic purposes of higher education, organized by NERCHE and the Kettering Foundation, are timely and important. This is the case not only because the higher education civic engagement movement has plateaued and needs a new, more comprehensive approach, as John Saltmarsh has persuasively written. It is also because of the nature of broader challenges facing contemporary societies. The 21st century is full of multiplying problems, from global warming to rising inequality, from disease pandemics to growing conflicts, from the need for education reform to the challenges of increasingly diverse societies and the flow of peoples across borders. These cannot be adequately addressed without a vast expansion of talent, energy, ingenuity – an expansion that will only come from an entirely new level of respect for the potentials of people without degrees, credentials, and celebrity status. The two dominant approaches to problem solving -- expert centered approaches, on the one hand, and market-centered approaches on the other -- are the major obstacles in the way.

There are in fact growing, vitally important signs of a new paradigm that counters the dominant approaches, based on such civic respect and focused on citizen agency. It is emerging across fields from public health to development aid, from education and family social science to climate change and resource management. The civic agency paradigm asks, what are policies, strategies, bodies of knowledge and learning methods that deepen people's capacities to be agents of change, to act individually and collectively across differences on common challenges?

Today's higher education is a major driver of the dominant technocratic and marketplace models. Recent efforts like the League Table produced by the Times Higher Education Supplement to specify a "global two hundred" of top research universities or the Jiao Tong university list of the "global five hundred," combining both technocratic and market trends, illustrate this. These endeavors imply that those credentialed and designated as "the best and the brightest" will lead everyone else – and imply the radical marginalization of others' civic agency. In contrast, higher education also holds potential to become a seedbed for the civic alternative, what might be called a politics of civic agency. The emerging civic agency paradigm can be understood as a struggle for the ascendancy of the democratic soul of higher education over entrenched technocratic trends.

Here I want to comment briefly on three dimensions of what a politics of civic agency brings to the engagement movement. In the May/June issue of *Change* I develop these arguments in more detail, with a specific emphasis on student civic learning ("Against the Current – Developing the civic agency of students").

Civic politics is the key to institutional transformation: In the 1998 Wingspread Conference on renewing the civic mission of research universities – one of the launching moments in our movement – Gerald Taylor, southern director of the Industrial Areas Foundation of broad based citizen groups, issued a blunt challenge. This aspiring movement, he argued, will not lead to any substantial change in the cultures and institutional structures of higher education without what he called an "organizing" approach. Organizing, in Taylor's sense, is the sort of civic politics practiced by networks associated with the Industrial Areas Foundation, the Gamaliel Foundation, PICO and many independent citizen organizations. "Politics" here involves an older sense of the concept dating from the Greeks, described in Bernard Crick's classic, *In Defense of Politics*. In this sense politics is not partisan warfare but close to the opposite, a method that humans have developed to negotiate different, sometimes conflicting interests and views in order to get things done. The aim is not to do away with conflict – politics sometimes surfaces submerged clashes of interest. Politics also illuminates otherwise hidden power dynamics. In higher education, as Taylor argued a decade ago, it will require engaging all the diverse stakeholders – faculty, staff, students, trustees, communities, state legislators, foundations – in new alliances. It also means close attention to strategic levers of change.

Civic politics is the way to counter the technocratic destruction of civic life. "Power" is rarely part of the discussion in the higher ed movement. I'm convinced that this is because power dynamics are obscured by the language of engagement as "service to others." The language of service has strengths and it is full of good intentions. But it also hides technocratic domination.

Over the last fifty years, much of higher education has effected what the historian Donald Bender calls a shift from "civic professionalism" to "disciplinary professionalism." The civic practices and identities of the citizen teacher or citizen pharmacist or citizen politician or citizen doctor or citizen clergy once lent democracy larger public meaning and rooted democracy in local cultures. In recent decades, as the normative cultures of research universities became increasingly detached, much of higher education often lost connections to the real life, history, and cultures of actual places. For instance, Joe Nathan, director of the Center for School Change at the Humphrey Institute, observes that teacher education curriculum typically includes little or nothing on learning to work collaboratively with parents and other stakeholders, who have often far different backgrounds and interests. When such learning is absent, graduates come to understand themselves as detached experts providing service for people, not as citizens working with fellow citizens on public problems. The

eroding ties to place among higher education graduates is linked to detached scholarship in research universities and to the positivist patterns of professional education described by Donald Schön.

Combined, these trends produce "technocracy," or domination of problem solving processes and institutions by experts removed from the common civic life. Technocracy is normally invisible. It presents itself as "objective" knowledge and methods. The effects of technocracy are not hard to document, however. For instance, beginning in the 1960s, formal education increasingly pushed parents and residents of local communities to the sidelines of schools. David Mathews, president of the Kettering Foundation, has argued that "the public as a real force in the life of schools was deliberately and systematically rooted out. Citizens were replaced with a new group of professionals, true guardians of the public interest, there to do what it was assumed citizens couldn't or wouldn't do." In his book *The Future of Democracy*, Peter Levine shows the effects of technocracy in a number of ways. For example, in 1960, membership in PTAs was 45 percent of all families in school. Today it is less than half that figure. Today, programs and pedagogies designed to achieve educational excellence neglect civic dimensions of "accountability."

Technocracy weakens civic agency in multiple ways. It undermines the standing and devalues the knowledge of those without credentials, degrees, and university training. It creates a citizenry who are spectators, dependents, clients and consumers rather than problem solvers and co-producers. Technocracy has transformed mediating institutions which once served as civic meeting grounds – locally grounded schools, congregations, businesses, unions, nonprofits, government agencies – into service delivery operations.

To use ecological analogies, just as environmental work involves restorations of wetlands and habitats, the task of civic renewal requires not only means to address symptoms of civic decline, such as methods of deliberation that teach skills of listening to others of different views. It also means going upstream to renew the wellsprings of civic life in an information age, professional practices of identity formation now stripped of their civic dimensions. This is the only way to re-grow mediating institutions and civic cultures hollowed out over the last century through specialization and expert service delivery. We need to challenge our institutions to deep, multi-dimensional civic reconnection, and also to map what institutions are likely to take leadership in this process, such as the regionally based and culturally based colleges and universities (e.g. HBCUs).

Civic politics will be necessary to recreate our institutions as democracy colleges and universities. The university wide Task Force on Civic Engagement at the University of Minnesota, established in 2000 by then provost Robert Bruininks after several years of planning and interviewing by our Center for Democracy and Citizenship, used public work theory. In this perspective, "civic engagement" is not about after-hours service but rather is a constituting dimension of scholarship and teaching. It takes different forms in every department and collegiate unit – a diversity of approaches and self-interests that facilitated buy-in from deans and department chairs. The approach also led us to argue that democratic society building should become the overall mission for higher education in the 21st century. This argument is embodied in the description of our institutions as "agents and architects of democracy," in the Wingspread Declaration: *Renewing the Civic Mission of the American Research University* that Elizabeth Hoiland and I co-authored out of that first Wingspread meeting for a group of higher education leaders in 1999. This view of higher education's mission leads to a focus on culture change -- how civic engagement might infuse organizational identity, not simply take shape in discrete activities. As Ed Fogelman, chair of the Task Force put it, the University of Minnesota should not aim to do civic engagement; rather, it should be an engaged institution.

Such an identity and mission must become the heart of the new engagement movement. The only way to counter the trends for elite universities to marginalize everyone else will be to embody a vital and also deeply practical mission of our institutions as democracy schools. Land grant universities once earned this label. They were called "democracy colleges." This needs to become the designation to which all aspire.

Harry C. Boyte
Center for Democracy and Citizenship

Ok, much to ponder and comment on, let me start with the idea of deliberation encouraging listening. How can the academic citizen learn to listen to the community citizen? The community citizen may not be highly educated, yet capable of learning. The community citizen may be verbal regarding their perceptions. Deliberative forums can be a leveling field for such listening. But, I'm getting ahead of myself.

One can learn much from civil conversations, but a nice conversation with one or two people is not a deliberative forum. Believing that deliberative forums can be an avenue to create an atmosphere where community citizens and higher education can communicate together in a manner that can lead to action - action leading to new knowledge via research for academic pursuit and action bringing about tangible community change (i.e. an after school program for at risk youth); the question is how to achieve this depth of deliberation? How can a setting be created that is conducive of mutual listening and mutual learning for both the academic and the community citizen?

One idea...

If deliberation is aimed at strengthening democracy, everything prior to the deliberation needs to be conducive of democracy, i.e. - inclusive of diverse marketing, inclusive of recruiting a broad audience of gender, age, class, and professions representative of the issue, etc. The setting needs to be conducive and supportive of listening to each other, and the forum development process needs to be conducive and supportive of democracy. For example, limited parking and no one knowing what floor the "public" meeting is being held is not conducive of inclusive involvement. If the forum is not advertised in an inclusive manner - i.e. limited or no public announcement of the forum, etc. it is not conducive to attracting diverse participants. Many examples could be shared.

These examples seem simplistic, but yet are important to involving community citizens in a real give and take of pros and cons with academicians, politicians or administrators, etc. seeking public engagement. Academia can not substitute management efficiency for the more time consuming democratic affectiveness without sacrificing democratic principles. All this must happen before real listening and communicating can occur - seemingly a statement deserving appropriate study. Regardless...

One academic champion doing all the organizing and outreach to hold a deliberative forum to involve the academy and the community can not create sustainable democratic change. But, to really achieve a sustainable civic renewal effort - or to just hold a successful deliberative forum - the one champion needs another / or others to partner to move forward. As habit over time becomes a permanent behavior, practicing democratic principles begets a stronger democracy.

Barbara A. Brown

Harry, as usual I am moved by your vision of democracy and the role that higher education can play, but I am hoping we will spend a lot of time at this gathering talking about HOW to make that happen. If we are stuck, as John argues, how do we get momentum back?

In this regard, I think it would be very interesting to have your take on how we use community organizing approaches to regain momentum. Who with power (or potential power) in higher education cares? How can we mobilize this interest? One constituency that we have undercultivated is trustees. Increasingly they are funding civic engagement centers and like efforts. They have influence in other sectors but have we helped them to find a voice for this kind of education as the Princeton 55 alumni have? We should take a look at how well this has worked in Gene Lang's Project Pericles.

Liz Hollander

To paraphrase a line from the Passover Seder: "What makes this meeting different from all other meetings?" As I read John and Matt's framing statement, a few things come to mind.

First, the meeting's goal is to contribute to the development of a movement to help American society become a genuine participatory democracy. The goal of helping America fulfill the democratic promise of America for all Americans is, in my judgment, the right goal for a gathering of democratic minded community leaders and academics. More specifically, devoting significant thought and active attention to developing a national, indeed global, movement for participatory democracy could not be more important if we are to help solve the enormous problems that face our society and world.

Second, the framing statement assumes that the democratic transformation of colleges and universities is crucial to the democratic transformation of America into a genuinely democratic society. In the opening decade of the 21st century, it seems to me nearly axiomatic that universities are the most influential institution in advanced societies. As John Gardner, Ernest Boyer, and Derek Bok, among others, have noted, universities possess enormous resources (most significantly human resources), play a leading role in developing and transmitting new discoveries and educating societal leaders, and significantly shape the schooling system. As it currently operates, the American higher educational system is not contributing to the development of democratic communities and schools. Among other things, American universities have tended to contribute to a schooling system that is elitist and hierarchical. As Dewey emphasized, democratic schooling is the basis for a participatory democratic society. Simply put, unless the schooling system from pre-K through 20 is transformed into a democratic schooling system, America will continue to fall far short of functioning as a decent, just, participatory democracy. The transformation of higher education, as the most influential, strategic, powerful component of the schooling system, is crucial to the transformation of the entire schooling system and the education of democratic, creative, caring, contributing democratic citizens.

Third, the framing statement emphasizes that the key questions are the implementation questions. That is, "What is to be done to create an effective, creative, progressive, university civic engagement movement dedicated to the democratic transformation of American higher education, schooling, and society in general?" Needless to say, that is an exceedingly hard question to answer. But unless we attempt to answer that question, and the even harder question of how do we create such a movement for participatory

democracy, the university civic engagement movement will not only stall, but become mired in endless disputation and academic (in the pejorative sense) debate, mirroring dominant academic culture. In Dewey's Dream, Lee Benson, John Puckett and I propose that university-assisted community schools constitute the best practical means for transforming universities, schools, and communities and developing participatory democracy. We discuss how these schools need to be developed democratically, involving community, school, and university partners, in a university's local ecological community, as a means to develop neighborly democratic face-to-face communities.

We also sketch how these local efforts have been and can be connected to national and global organizations and emerging movements. We offered these proposals primarily to stimulate democratic dialogue and the generation of counterproposals as to how to develop and advance a participatory democratic movement to develop a participatory democratic society. This meeting, I am sure, will contribute significantly to helping us answer the "what is to be done" and "how to" (the implementation) questions. I could not be more pleased to be a participant.

Ira Harkavy

As I read the posts to date, I want to echo several of you who raised concern that we focus on how. For us to get movement in a stalled effort, it seems to me that we need to think about strategies and processes that would create new energy, new actions. So for me, the critical question as we begin this discussion is how and where to focus our work.

The first focusing effort might be to discern whether we agree with Harry's conception as laid out in the initial post. Do we agree with his focus on civic agency? If so, we can then move on; if not, we'll have to stop there to come to some agreement about our notions of civic engagement. I hope we could accept Harry's definition as our working definition, so as not to spend our very limited time in the world of definitions (which could occupy the entire conference).

If we agree with Harry, and move on to focus on the university, then the question becomes, what part of the university shall we consider? I think there may be several explanations for the stalling of the movement. One is that too often, the conversations in higher education remain at a theoretical level, not grounded in practical programs and strategies (one only has to think about the interminable but almost never useful battles over general education). A second explanation for the lack of progress is the narcissistic nature of higher education; it's never about them (students or communities), it's almost always about us. I have been to meetings about civic engagement in higher education where students are never even mentioned.

For us in the American Democracy Project, the focus has always been about student civic outcomes. Engagement of the university in the community, engagement of scholars conducting research in the communities...these important components we view as supporting roles, not as the focus of the work. From my perspective, as a result, I would love to see us address questions about what civic agency would look like as student learning outcomes. What would be the characteristics and attributes we are trying to foster in students. How would we know we were successful?

That discussion would prompt a second conversation about the optimum ways that universities could create those outcomes? What programs, what experiences, what courses,

and what co-curricular activities might be developed to create civic-capable graduates?

And that conversation would lead us to ask what our gathering, and the results of our gathering, could do to create those conditions on our campuses. That would take us back to Liz's question about how to organize campuses to achieve our objectives. Who are the natural allies? Where could the critical first steps be taken, both on individual campuses and nationally? How might organizations and foundations participate?

This student outcomes focus may not be where other participants in our upcoming gathering want to go but it colors all of our work in the American Democracy Project, and thus has become for me an important frame for thinking about civic engagement.

George Mehaffy

I am glad we are doing this on-line forum to jump-start the conversation and move us to action. So I'd like to reflect back on what's been said and then share a few ideas.

As George Mehaffy noted, we need to settle on a focus. I call this the "what is the 'it?'" part of a dialogue. What's been proposed as the "it" so far includes civic agency, civic politics, engagement not as service but as knowledge, participatory democracy, deliberation, and community organizing. Add to that mix the language of and movements in diversity education, cultural competency, civic education and engagement, community-university partnerships, the institution as citizen, social responsibility, social entrepreneurs, responsible citizens, social responsibility, and, my personal favorite, deliberative democracy. Did I miss anything? Maybe the movement has plateaued because our thinking keeps evolving. Like everyone else, I don't want to get stuck on language, but I am wondering about the scope and whether we are all developing strategies to the same end.

I am not arguing that we should limit the "it" in this way, but I do want to share with you the scope of The Democracy Imperative's work: educating to strengthen public life and advance a more just and deliberative democracy. Wordy, so our elevator language is deliberative democracy (which gets us into all sorts of trouble with political philosophers and people who hate inaccessibility language). We specify what we mean by education of this sort, which goes to George's point of identifying student outcomes. We advocate for education in democratic principles -- basic Constitutional ideals -- of freedom, justice, and equity, and democratic practices of inclusive dialogue, public reasoning, conflict transformation (another big word), and collaborative policy and decision making. (We are a learning community and our language is a work in progress. Just this week, a member proposed that we simplify the arts of democracy to inclusive dialogue, public reasoning, and social and political action. Sounds good to me.) We want to be clear that we are not advocating for "process only" skills, but also for substantive knowledge and learning -- the why? or so what? of this work. And also that diversity, equity and access, and dialogue and action across difference are central to this work.

Regarding action: We met for the first time in June and created three pages of strategies to advance democracy in and through higher education. Here are a few: partner with and learn from those in the field such as Study Circles (Everyday Democracy as of this Friday) and Public Conversations Project; call for and publish a series of papers that explain the arts of democracy and illuminate their relevance to interdisciplinary programs, disciplines, and what George Kuh and AACU call "high impact" learning experiences of learning communities, service learning, faculty-student collaborative research, first year experiences,

capstones, and study abroad; cultivate democratic leadership and shared governance in higher education, under the theory that institutional leaders should model what they should be teaching; a repository of syllabi and programs (going up next week); an on-going, on-line dialogue on "public reasoning" as a core competency in student learning. (Some of these are up and running. Others need funding.) There's more... and we are trying to do what Liz Hollender suggests -- follow the principles of community organizing by running as flat an organization as possible and relying on the hard work and good will of our members. We hope our work will complement, not supplant, the other terrific efforts to get higher education unstuck.

I welcome more posts on the scope of this forum/work in the hope that we can settle on it before or at least as we move to action. Or perhaps we need to start threads on language, scope, action linked to, for example, social responsibility vis-a-vis political engagement.

Thanks,

Nancy Thomas
The Democracy Imperative
University of New Hampshire

I've now read the posts from John, Nancy and David.

For me, the issue of focus continues to be the paramount question. I'm tyrannized by the fact that we have such a short time to do so much, a grand total of about 10 hours or so of meetings together across Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday morning. While my own personal interest continues to emphasize student outcomes, that clearly isn't the only work to be done. John's argument that we need to think about faculty work is another important way to approach institutional change. I also take seriously David's concern about the imposition of any required course of action. We're all at work in the field, in different places, with different capacities, strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and challenges.

So what shall we do in this gathering at Kettering? What shall be our focus? I think Nancy's comments, and particularly the work she described that The Democracy Imperative undertook in a strategic planning session in June, might serve as a useful guide. Let me suggest at least two possible frames. The first addresses collective action. Assuming that different groups will focus on different aspects of this movement, and that we'll all continue to work in our own ways, what might we do collectively to advance the field? I'm often struck by how much we work in isolation from one another. To achieve results, we often have to get very grounded, each addressing our own particular audience. Yet for this to be a movement, we need to see all of the various efforts, beyond our own work, as part of a wider mosaic. I suspect, therefore, that we need mechanisms -- at least language and events -- that would help us see our connections to one another, and to a larger field of endeavor.

A second frame would be to consider what is currently missing that would contribute to the development of this field (and institutional focus and behavior)? Essentially this is a set of questions about the culture of higher education, about what is honored, rewarded, and recognized as legitimate work...and how to get the civic engagement agenda made more prominent among the many competing priorities of the academy.

As I think about these two frames, a preliminary list of possible strategies and activities suggest themselves. These are not as robust or extensive as Nancy's but simply a quick listing of things I thought about as I read Ira's book. Here are some initial ideas.

- If this is about higher education, it seems to me that we need a grand vision...yet not so grand that it's about everything. So language is important. What's the purpose of the exercise? How might we describe the civic engagement movement in something just slightly larger than elevator language...that is accessible to many different audiences?
- Do we need an annual convening of the many different voices to continue to build the field and the vision? We have lots of meetings and conference around the theme of civic engagement but we seldom have an opportunity to think across our different groups. Right now we have the occasional Wingspread or Kettering gathering. How might we have something occur with regularity that could help build the field?
- Do we need an organization that would represent the field? AAHE might have had that role once. AAC&U might take up that work. But AAC&U has historically focused broadly on liberal education, and with its recent growth, probably isn't interested in a narrowing of focus, unless it is in some form of breakout group or SIG. Yet organizations can be very influential.
- For this new work to take hold, university leaders need to understand and embrace these changes in focus and emphasis. Yet there are few if any opportunities for acquainting university leaders with this emerging area of emphasis. How might we help presidents and provosts see the value in this work? How might we get university teams to focus on the civic engagement field, planning their own strategies?
- Do we need state governments and the federal government to incorporate "civic" incentives into grant opportunity guidelines, and to build in other institutional incentive structures, to help further this work? If so, what would be the focus of the incentives?
- Do we need other mechanisms to promote "good work" in popular as well as scholarly venues? How do we seize the opportunity provided by some of the language of the presidential campaign to emphasize civic engagement as legitimate university work?
- How might members of the foundation world be enlisted to contribute to this work in a more collective and coherent way?

George Mehaffy

I appreciate the opportunity to engage in this discussion, and I look forward to deepening these conversations at Kettering later this month. I wanted to just quickly pick up on a point George made in an earlier posting regarding students and our tendency as educators to sometimes leave them out of these sorts of discussions.

As this important discussion about the current and future state of community learning moves forward, I think it's important to consider the voices and the experiences of our students, who are direct recipients of the programs and the theories we are discussing and who hold critical insights into how we are doing as civic educators and what we can do to deepen the community engaged work that we all care about. Moreover, as we talk about moving forward, it may be useful to have discussions at Kettering about meeting students where they are -- the recent CIRCLE publication "Millennials Talk Politics," for instance, could be a useful text in this regard.

Toward that, I'm just going to share a bit about a series of faculty development workshops we hosted last month that were designed to help our faculty members gain insights on the 'best practices' of community learning by talking directly with students who have some experience with community learning at the University of Denver.

Ten faculty member and 6 students participated in the first workshop and 8 faculty members and 6 students participated in the second workshop. We asked students to talk about the rewards and challenges of doing community learning, and we also asked them to give direct advice to faculty members about "best practices" for constructing and implementing a community learning course.

The major themes that emerged from these discussions included:

- Community learning courses focus too much on the accumulation of hours at community sites and are lacking in "meaningful" academic activities that connect classroom theories with community work;
- Faculty members' involvement with the community aspect of the courses was uneven and oftentimes non-existent;
- When students work in communities they are confronted with issues of cultural identity that challenge received cultural assumptions;
- Community learning demands that faculty members re-think their received roles as experts/technocrats;
- There is a tension in the community learning movement between seeing students as "whole people" and/or 'minds on a stick' ;
- Students overwhelmingly expressed a desire for academic work that is developed in community learning courses to have a public audience that goes beyond their peers and professor.

This group of students are clearly not a representative group of community based learning students, and I'll save you all from any extended analysis of the above points, but I do think it is worth noting here (primarily, because I haven't seen this strain developing in the forum) that we could probably do more to think through the third bullet point regarding transformational issues of cultural identity and privilege that emerges as a topic of great interest to our students. During our workshops, students spoke eloquently about how community learning opportunities gave them opportunities to work with people who are different than themselves, people they would not ordinarily have a public relationship with. Moreover, our students, who tend to come from privileged backgrounds, talked a great deal about the transformative quality of their community learning experiences, especially, when it came to issues of cultural identity and the challenges they all felt to their own subject positions. In short, many of them talked about how when they entered their community sites, they saw themselves as separate and distinct from the people they were working with. By the end, though, they used language like "I began to see myself involved in the same struggles as the people I was working with," and "My motivation for working in the community is connected to the issues and problems faced by community members." It's worth noting, too, that these transformations generally take place in relationship with skillful faculty members who understand how to work with students in these areas and support them through these experiences. This, to me, is one of the most important aspects of community engaged work, and while it doesn't necessarily fit into the frameworks that John mentioned in his 1 February post, or even, I imagine, into what most faculty members are expecting students to get from community engaged experiences, I think we would do well to consider the role that cultural identity plays in this work.

Finally, our students advised faculty members to embrace the messiness of community

engaged work and to spend time building working relationships with their students. "Communicate clearly that you are not going to communicate clearly," one student suggested. I'm not entirely sure that the community learning movement has embraced the messiness and the complexity of community learning as a pedagogy. If it's being done properly, it's looking at students as whole people and it's valuing their motivations for engaging in communities (I really appreciate Rick's comments in this area). In short, it's helping students develop public skills of negotiation, dialogue, deliberation and working with and understanding power and engaging in a new kind of politics. Our students noted that faculty members who do community learning well develop solid working relationships with their students that shifts the power dynamic of the faculty member from an expert/technocrat to a manager/consultant. In effect, the students were encouraging faculty members to reconstitute their roles. No small task. From my experience, most faculty members are learning this on the fly—very few faculty members enter the profession with this vision and this set of experiences and skills. Moving forward, then, the community learning movement needs to pay a great deal more attention to faculty development training and to inscribing community learning work into graduate school training. This will obviously take a great deal of time.

All the best to all.

Eric Fretz
University of Denver

Dear friends,

I've read with interest the posts of the past two weeks; this comment offers an overview response to what seems to me key themes that have emerged over the course of the electronic conversation. It is basically my own two cents to those of you who will be at the face-to-face Kettering/NERCHE meeting. Many thanks for listening, and many thanks to NERCHE and John Saltmarsh for opening this electronic forum leading up to that meeting.

So, the two cents' worth:

In the first comment I posted, I was trying to stress three main points. 1) I didn't agree with the view that the moment in which this meeting takes place is one of "the movement stalled." 2) I think that the academic CE movement (or tendency or whatever you want to call us) has been in a phase of vibrant experimentation, in which good paradigms at the level of courses, centers, and projects have messily emerged. And 3) what we most need now are not declarations or manifestos of key principles or strategies, but regular convenings/networks/venues where a broad, diverse community of practice can come together to offer ongoing reflection and argument about principles and strategies.

In listening to the rich discussion on the online forum, and in my own further reflection, I'd like to offer four thoughts for those who are gathering next week. The first is about the context of the present moment, the next three about key themes that have been distilled in the forum.

1) I think that the key context for this moment and this meeting is the large r legitimation crisis in higher education, the breakdown of the implicit social compact that gives the sector our resources and autonomy. For me, that (rather than the fear of being stalled) is the elephant in the room. The Spellings Commission, the defunding of public higher ed systems,

the attacks on tuition levels, the rise of calls for improved assessment--we in the civic engagement movement ignore this at our peril. If we don't come up with our own views about how CE repairs the higher ed social compact and represents our answerability to the larger society, other folks will define these issues for us. I'm not arguing for "this kind of assessment rather than that," but rather for seeing our work and our struggles in connection with a sector-wide crisis that is reaching "perfect storm" dimensions.

2) In the online forum, I hear three key themes or problems that have emerged in both the "big questions" and the "strategies" threads of the discussion. On the "academic" side, there is the problem, what does an engaged institution look like? George Mehaffy underscored this issue to great effect, in my view. If I'm right that our national community of practice has distilled some powerful models and accounts at the level of engaged pedagogy, course/curriculum design, centers, and partnership projects (always in need of improvement and discussion, of course), I don't think we have begun to equally good change--work at the level of institutions and sectors. I think that we need regular convenings and networking to push forward our answers to such questions as how to change hiring/tenure/promotion, how to change graduate preparation and the arc of the engaged scholars' career, how differences of sector (AASCU institutions, liberal arts colleges, research universities, community colleges, HBCUs) require different models of institutionalized engagement, how we envision the links with "traditional scholarship and teaching" in engaged institutions. In short, if we want civic engagement to be something more than a counter-normative practice within inert institutions, we have to think through the links of CE to other normative parts of higher ed institutions.

3) I think that the second key thread of the online discussion, which clearly sets an agenda for the participants in the upcoming meeting, is the "democracy" side of the equation: what is the vision of democratic practice, of the role of higher education in a vibrant democratic culture, that underlies our change-making within higher ed? Here Harry's discussion of civic agency, John's and Nancy's discussion of democratic renewal, and many responses, are sketching an agenda that integrates political theory, discussions of civic practice, and discussions of civic pedagogy. I'd only add my earlier point that that, from my point of view, the best outcome would not be the authorizing of a certain approach but the imagining and funding of an ongoing setting or type of convening to launch and continue this conversation. Study circles? regional retreats?

4) Finally I think that Rick and Eric have rightly underscored the need to include students as partners in the development of these practices, strategies, theories, and space--and to think about institutionalizing the role of students as one of the key items on the agenda. This is of course related to the first two threads (what are engaged institutions like? what is our view of the role of higher ed in democratic renewal), but distinct. There are interesting and important tensions as well as convergences, I think, between institutionalizing CE and empowering/learning from students in doing CE. Again I'd say we need venues to ongoingly reflect on them and create new strategies.

That's all, and I'm sure I've said more than my two cents worth. If the meeting's participants help us all to find the time, space, and resources to advance these issues and efforts, you will have the gratitude of many folks, myself included. Meanwhile warm thanks to everyone and have a great meeting.

David Scobey
Donald W. and Ann M. Harvard Professor of Community Partnerships
Director, Harvard Center for Community Partnerships
Bates College

From the Framing Question : "If engagement in higher education is to emerge more broadly as a core value of the University of the 21st century – as centrally important to the civic mission of higher education and to producing and transmitting new knowledge – what strategic directions are needed? How can scholarly practice help realize the democratic purpose of higher education? What are the institutional commitments that are needed to fostering a citizen politics among students and among academics?"

First, I have to thank NERCHE for creating this open forum for people (and student-scholars of engagement like me!) to respond to a collaborative even though we will not be attending the conference. I think that demonstrates a key inclusivity to fresh perspectives as the organization proactively considers a direction with meaningful impact.

My dissertation research is examining how faculty at a public research land-grant university engage with their community partners in research-based partnerships that last for at least two years. I've completed 22 interviews, (13 faculty and 9 community partners), across several different disciplines. I'm not only seeking to gain a deeper understanding of their collaborative process, but also determine which factors of the partnership most impact the relationship between leaders and the partnership's sustainability.

The point about knowledge production is deeply significant. I have recently built a relationship with a senior faculty member in sociology who challenged me to question my field's place in knowledge production (higher education administration - and I have two other professional degrees in social work and urban planning).

What I am beginning to learn is this: there seems to be a significant connection between the need to understand the dynamics of community engagement practice and theory, to also gain a deeper understanding of who the specific models are of this work across levels.

For example, I am finding a theme in my dissertation research where several of the faculty partners expressed a need for a community-university liaison, a specific individual with specific experience in community engagement work (not just scholarship, but actual experience in and with communities) who can help them not only administrate the partnership, but also provide talents that enable them to do more research (publication) about their work. Moreover, the overarching assumption that is made in both service-learning and community engagement literature that communities do not understand nor value research is resoundingly being proven wrong by my dissertation research.

I say this because it reflects on me personally. Upon entering my field, beginning with being a community issue organizer in Detroit to a city planner to an academic administrator to doctoral student - the commonality is that since middle school I have always wanted to be involved in community development. I am an emerging scholar of engagement, not just engaged scholar. But the problem I am having in this field - while I have had INVALUABLE experiences to meet many of you and also share in dialogues based on your and others' work - is that there seems to be a void in determining where people like me fit in the field.

Sure, we have a plethora of scholarship on service-learning and its impact on institutions (academic mostly, and community impact literature is building, thankfully). We have a plethora of scholarship now (since 1990) on the role of community engagement in higher education, and higher education's institutional responsibility to community engagement (including impact on faculty and undergraduate students across institutional types). But we

are sorely lacking in an understanding of how we are developing scholar-practitioners of engagement. I haven't even mentioned that I'm an African -American woman - so there is the issue of how we begin to build and include not just the voices but also the scholarship of people of color, and from many other underrepresented groups - especially at the faculty level since we believe "they do a lot for this work". But, related to the significant funding dilemmas mentioned by someone else and in juxtaposition to the 2008 presidential election cycle and the promise of Barack Obama (a scholar and a former community organizer in Chicago who publishes!) - what does our field have to offer? In that frame - citizen politics may take on an entirely new energy, an entirely new demographic, and are we prepared to welcome an entirely deeper level of knowledge toward this energy and this demographic?

Where are the opportunities? Where is the mentorship? And, where there is mentorship, and where there have been opportunities, where is the generativity? What does that mean toward the framing questions of the conference? Who's involved in the conversation? Who isn't? Why not? And when will they be involved?

Angie Allen

What Are the Big Questions?

It seems to me that the significance of the account of engagement represented in the "serviceification of higher education" quote in the framing question is that engagement remains strongly associated with traditional conceptions of the faculty service role and therefore, in the dominant hierarchy of research, teaching, and service, it tends to be devalued in institutional reward policies. This varies by institutional type and mission, but it is a hierarchy that drives the academic marketplace and institutional striving. It represents an instance of where the movement toward deeper and more widespread engagement appears "stuck." If engagement activity on the part of faculty is valued as no more than service, traditionally understood, then the movement will not be able to advance.

A further implication of the framing narrative is that it goes to the heart of the faculty role - the generation and transmission of new knowledge. But this is not the predominant way in which engagement work is framed within higher education. Within a "mission" framework, higher education justifies engagement as a way for it to fulfill its mission to educate responsible citizens. But it is also a way for it to meet its academic mission of generating knowledge by bringing together academic knowledge with community-based knowledge for the production of new knowledge. This is a key point made by the author of Dewey's Dream - the engagement work at Penn allows the institution to better fulfill both its civic and academic missions.

This particular account is emblematic of tensions in the civic engagement movement that are felt on many numerous campuses and collectively contribute to the mire in which the movement is currently "stuck."

I recognize, too, that in what I have written so far that I am emphasizing the role of faculty. Following up on George Meffaffy's insights, this is not to suggest that I favor attention to faculty over attention to students or to student outcomes. On the contrary, I believe that ultimately the aim of our efforts should be the learning outcomes for our students. The question for me is how do we get to the desired civic learning outcomes through the existing parameters of academic culture? From my point of view, unless we work to change

the institutional cultures in which faculty work takes place , we will never get to the point of fulfilling our hopes for the kind of student learning outcomes that will foster civic agency.

I'd like to suggest that at this time in the life of the movement there is an opportunity for stepping back and attempting to reach a position on the big questions before we delve into strategies, solutions, and priorities. My concern is that without asking and attempting to resolve the big questions we will be left with pursuing incremental improvements and adjustment to current unsatisfactory models in which we work. Following up on Nancy Thomas's comments , I think we need to grapple with the "it" of what our larger goals are: we need to be clear of the prize if we are going to pursue strategies that allow us to move in different directions while arriving at a common destination.

Let me suggest what might be considered three big questions; these are ones that I see emerging , others may find other questions to be more central .

First, we should answer the question of whether civic engagement is primarily aimed at academic improvement or institutional and social transformation in challenging the status quo for democratic ends? How we answer this question will help determine whether we see engagement as a deliberate challenge to existing institutional structures, policies, and practices. Engagement with the community that is focused self-referentially on how the campus can improve its image, how it can market itself more effectively, or how it can offer more effective educational practices can be done without fundamentally altering existing cultures and practices. Engagement with the community that leads to the acceptance of alternative epistemologies, a reorganization of knowledge through the curriculum – especially through cross disciplinary ventures, reinvention of how the curriculum is delivered, and institutional policies that foster institutional change, has the potential to transform the institution as well as foster transformational social change. I would propose an answer to this question that affirms institutional and social transformation. With that, the concept of "University -assisted community schools" discussed in Dewey's Dream is precisely the kind answer to the question about purpose that is a means to achieve institutional and social transformation for democratic ends.

To Harry Boyte's framing of a field of "civic agency," I think it has promise on all counts above. For me, it also raises some red flags. I would want to make sure that the development of a field of study of "civic agency" does not become an area for theoretical formulations and strategic accommodation to existing norms of the academy. Developing a field of study should be done as a compliment to wider civic engagement efforts. There are deep, negative implications in segregating and marginalizing curricular initiatives. This is not what Harry is arguing for. But I want to be cautious. The argument is being made by at least one scholar that service learning, as one of the chief means of advancing civic engagement on many campuses, should focus on theorizing about community and that it should be "disciplined" as an organized field of study within the existing confines of higher education as the best strategy for its long term institutionalization and sustainability. (I'm referring specifically to the writing of Dan Butin.)

A second big question is how do we think about knowledge creation, and do we see the world divided up between knowledge producers in the academy and knowledge consumers outside the academy? How we answer this question goes, I think, to the heart of what we mean by engagement. If we argue against this divide, which privileges academic knowledge as the only legitimate knowledge, then we can think in terms of what Ernest Lynton called "an ecosystem of knowledge" in which there are multiple knowledge centers within a system of knowledge production, and within that system the University may not even be at the center of the ecosystem. As he describes this concept (in his 1994 essay, "Knowledge and

Scholarship"), he thought of knowledge as "dynamic, constantly made fresh and given new shape by its interactions with immediate issues and concerns...In short, the domain of knowledge has no one-way streets. Knowledge does not move from the locus of research to the place of application, from scholar to practitioner, teacher to student, expert to client. It is everywhere fed back, constantly enhanced. We need to think of knowledge in an ecological fashion, recognizing the complex, multifaceted and multiply-connected system by means of which discovery, aggregation, synthesis, dissemination, and application are interconnected and interacting in a wide variety of ways." This answer to the question of how we think about knowledge production is echoed by the work of Michael Gibbons (1994), among others, who describes a shift marked by movement away from traditional academic knowledge generation (pure, disciplinary, homogeneous, expert-led, supply-driven, hierarchical, peer reviewed, and almost exclusively university-based) to engaged knowledge generation (applied, problem-centered, trans-disciplinary, heterogeneous, hybrid, demand-driven, entrepreneurial, network-embedded etc.) Thinking about knowledge generation in a less university-centric way changes the educational experience of our students in fundamental ways: In Dewey's Dream, the Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences at Penn is quoted claiming: "Selfishly, I think Penn students have so much to learn from engagement...they have a lot to learn about the process of the creation of knowledge in a democratic society...knowledge is made in the world, in the end, and for the world, as much in art as it is in science. Universities engage multiple partners in the production of knowledge and we cannot erect barriers between universities and communities in that process. We are, in short, all in this together." So, for this question, I would argue for an answer that affirms a dynamic understanding of how knowledge is produced.

A third question – and I would suggest that if we answer the first two in the affirmative, then we can answer this in the affirmative as well – is whether is it the role of higher education to utilize knowledge in facilitating the essential public work of democratic deliberation and problem-solving? I see the concept of "civic agency" as a powerful catalyst for change in this direction. As Harry Boyte writes above, "higher education also holds potential to become a seedbed for the civic alternative, what might be called a politics of civic agency. The emerging civic agency paradigm can be understood as a struggle for the ascendancy of the democratic soul of higher education over entrenched technocratic trends." This is a paradigm that recognizes that higher education as it exists is centrally part of the problem of the apolitical nature of civic education – that expert-driven, hierarchical approaches to knowledge breed expert-driven, hierarchical approaches to politics. Civic agency, as I read it, holds potential for reclaiming the democratic mission of higher education and its role in renewing American democracy through what Harry calls "a politics of civic agency."

Again, what I am suggesting is that if we answer these three questions in the affirmative: whether civic engagement is aimed at institutional and social transformation; whether we see knowledge creation as a dynamic process reciprocally connecting the academy to other knowledge centers in society; and whether it is the role of higher education to utilize knowledge in facilitating the essential public work of democratic deliberation and problem-solving – perhaps then strategies, solutions, and priorities can be addressed at the next level of detail. At this point we could productively consider the practical implications of advancing civic engagement in higher education and formulate a small number of essential strategic directions.

John Saltmarsh

Dear friends ,

This is sent not just as a reply to John's post of "the big questions " but as a general response to the on-line conversation so far. (The strands feel all mashed together ; perhaps John might tease them apart into several different threads?)

I want to offer three thoughts about the upcoming invitational meeting. First , thoughts the larger moment we are in, the context of the meeting. Second, thoughts about the current "landscape" of the civic engagement movement in higher education. And finally thoughts for the participants about what I would hope might emerge. Needless to say, this is sent in a spirit of dialogue, an effort to prompt more thinking together.

1) So, the moment in which the meeting takes place . John and others have basically framed this moment as one of "stuck-ness" in the civic engagement movement; Harry used the image of our work having plateau'd. With great respect for their experience and wisdom, I would disagree, and I would urge the participants not to see the meeting as a time for their collective intervention to "unstuck" us. In the largest sense, I would describe our work taking place in a time of legimitation crisis in higher ed , the fraying of the social compact between the whole sector and the larger society--but also one of almost unprecedented creativity and innovation . Within our own "higher ed /democracy movement, " I would describe the past ten years or so as one of great ferment and institutional creativity: the founding of centers (the Bates Harvard Center being only one of dozens), the launching of deeper exemplary projects , the consolidation of consortia (Imagining America, the new research university network, Project Pericles, CCHP). I probably make eight consulting trips a year to talk about my work; folks are regularly coming to visit Bates; and I know that everyone who has written so far has even more of this movement -building and institution -building work. So the tone of the conversation , the sense of being mired, does not ring true to me personally.

Rather than a situation of stuck-ness, I would describe the current moment as (to take a really grandiose metaphor) something akin to the late 19th-century labor movement, with lots of tendencies all over the place and lots of strategies and organizational models being generated. I think that we need to time to come together in reflective practice in multiple spaces of affinity (similar types of institutions; different partners within cities and regions)--more on this below .

And yet I would also argue that over this past decade, we have developed intuitively a new model and theory of our work. I have talked with many of you (Harry, John, Ira, Nancy) about different aspects or outlines of that paradigm: the shift from a discourse of service to one of collaboration and also one of citizenship; the shift from a student/pedagogy centered set of practices to a multi-level set of practices that integrates teaching, research, student self-activity, institutional citizenship, and place-based project partnerships; the breaking out of the course and the semester as the boundaries of practice to create project partnerships, curricula, and programs /centers that do longer , deeper , more sustained, more intellectually ambitious, more socially effective work; the development of a underlying Deweyan, pragmatist theory of active learning and active citizenship in an unfinished public sphere . At Bates, we call initiatives that meet this "deeper, longer, more integrative" goal collaboratories.

I would argue that this new paradigm yokes together the two goals that John discusses in his post--improving higher ed and democratic transformation--and treats them as interdependent projects rather than opposed alternatives . And I'd argue (I know everyone agrees) that doing this kind of work entails a commitment to an ethics of collaboration that

higher education often don't live up to.

I'd also agree that this new paradigm has emerged in messy, intuitive ways, that we haven't often written clearly about what we mean by its key concepts, and have barely begun to talk through the ways it fits into the larger crisis of higher education or the most effective strategies it implies. But I'd argue to my comrades that this is very different from being stuck: it's being in the unfinished, inchoate, centrifugal moment of experimentation and creative change.

2) The landscape of the larger movement. If my 19th-century labor movement analogy is at all apt, the range of work being done under the rubric of civic engagement, or higher education for the public good, or democracy and higher education, is extraordinarily broad. It's different in different kinds of higher education settings, across different disciplines (I'm especially mindful of the distinctiveness of the arts, humanities, and design), different geographic scales. Other forces of change in the academy (multiculturalism, globalization, new technologies and media) are all leaving their mark on our work and being changed by our energy and innovation. I worry that a meeting like this will try to set an agenda on behalf of everyone, rather than mapping and looking for ways to connect the multifold centers of energy (a cross a wide Venn diagram of overlapping circles).

3) So, finally, a couple of thoughts and hopes for the face-to-face meeting. I would argue that past efforts to make programmatic statements and calls to action--Wingspread Declarations--have been important and useful, but we don't another one. As I have argued, I think that lots is happening, and there is a kind of seat of the pants new model emerging. Nor, I would argue, does the larger movement need the meeting to develop a statement about key strategies. I would argue that we need the institutionalization/funding of a network of ongoing, open venues for coming together to argue, theorize: sites of ongoing reflection to distill and organize the ferment. The Pugwash Conference, the Berkshire Women's History Conference, the St. Cloud summer meetings of the old Marxist Literary Group all seem to me possible models to draw on. And of course we need venues to write in--I thought that the Campus Compact summit essays could spark such an open forum, but that seems to have died on the vine.

End of thoughts. I have pushed back a little here; I hope the spirit of comradeship comes through; and I look forward to whatever new thoughts and push-backs get sparked.

Warmly,

David Scobey
Donald W. and Ann M. Harvard Professor of Community Partnerships
Director, Harvard Center for Community Partnerships
Bates College

I'm a pretty late arrival to this online forum, and hesitate to put anything out there, preferring the face-to-face conversations we will have in a couple of weeks. But I did want to share a few thoughts, in response to what people have shared so far.

Although I was trained as a political theorist, I have come to see myself much more as a practitioner in this "movement" (though this is probably the wrong word for it), certainly a reflective practitioner, but a practitioner nonetheless. It's not that I resist theorizing, but in working with students, in concrete particular contexts, I side with the sentiments David

expressed, in seeing that there is a variety of meaningful and deep "civic" work going on, whether it is called service-learning or civic engagement or community-based research or "collaboratory" work. As much as the surface of things in higher education may reveal all of the things Harry and John and Ira worry about, we need to take stock of all of this valuable work, and develop our theorizing, if that seems worthwhile, out of "work on the ground." After all, in advancing our "theories" and arguments about what's lacking or "stalling" in the larger national "movement," we always make reference to our own good work in our local contexts. I agree with David that, rather than advancing some singular phrase or "grand theory" to direct the movement or its work, we need to encourage students (and our institutions) to do the deeper, longer, non-semester- or individual course-driven work he alludes to in his post. From my vantage point, working with traditional 18- to 22-year-old undergraduate students in a residential college, I have come to believe that what we in higher education need to be doing is providing the intellectual scaffolding and individual and team coaching for students to deepen their work and their connection of this work to their lives as participants in the public life of their communities, as citizens. But this deepening work varies, and must vary, from campus to campus, and maybe even within campuses within programs and disciplines, with different student, community, and faculty/staff constituents. And it comes in programs that call themselves many different things: "civic engagement," "service-learning," "community organizing," "women's studies," "global/globalization studies," environmental studies or justice or sustainability, third-world studies (or any of a number of specific names for programs that get put collectively in the field of "diversity" or "multiculturalism").

It's not that I don't like the concept of civic agency Harry is currently advancing; in fact, it takes me back to my time at Rutgers, where my colleague who directed the women's studies program at the time urged me to do some writing about "agency" in the context of students doing "service-learning work" in "agencies" (i.e., social service agencies) that, in fact, denied true agency. "Civic agency" also builds upon the global work of people like Amartya Sen, who in *Development as Freedom* argues for a concept of agency, particularly as applied to women, that connects economic life and political life. I also agree with Harry that we always need to infuse "power" into our understanding of civic engagement. But I think this concept of civic agency needs more overtly and intentionally to include two elements critical to any conception of civic or political engagement in the context of higher education: voice and motivation/civic vocation.

In the aftermath of the new Ehrlich/Colby/Beaumont publication emerging from their political engagement project and the recently released CIRCLE/Kettering report *Millennials Talk Politics*, and in the context of my years of work with students, both college and high school students, I want us to remember that "voice" and "motivation" are critical elements of any conception of democratic citizenship we might want to discuss. A number of reports, as well as engagement initiatives like *Raise Your Voice* and Project 540, the high school program I coordinated a few years ago, clearly show that students yearn for and respond to authentic opportunities to voice their ideas and deliberate with others, ideally diverse others, about what should be done to improve our schools/campuses, communities, nation, and world.

And as someone who teaches community organizing on my campus, any notion of civic agency, power, and change must begin with citizens' or community members' motivation, with the values, self-interests, anger (at injustice, for example) that propel them to action or change. This key feature of civic motivation has so often been overlooked, in favor of academic frameworks that privilege knowledge and skills acquisition.

For me, the language of "vocation" or "calling" (but with overtly sectarian or religious

traditions or perspectives distilled down or out) is more compelling, as it recognizes that when students talk about "making a difference" in the world. Language that may come from student service experiences but isn't exclusive to them, I think they're saying that they want to respond to a "calling" from the world or situations they see or hear about in the world. I have found this language of vocational "call and response" present among so many of our primary student constituents: from those college students who went to Mississippi during Freedom Summer, to those who have done the work in the Gulf Coast after Hurricane Katrina, down to our students here at Providence College who recently have been organizing in conjunction with unionized janitors who are seeking a living wage contract from the company that our College has subcontracted with to provide these "services." I have begun thinking once again about this notion of "civic vocation" after reading the galleys of a forthcoming book by Harry's friends Ross Roholt, Roudy Hildreth, and Mike Baizerman, based on their study of three youth-oriented engagement projects, including Public Achievement. I personally believe that if we can articulate a conception of "politics as a vocation" 90 years after Max Weber coined the phrase, that we will be doing well to give young people what Kettering's "College Students Talk Politics" report called "a language to explore what is political in their lives." But that's my theoretical perspective. Once again, I don't think we're at a point where we should be arguing or advocating for a preferred conceptual framework that we would impose on all of higher education. I think we need to concentrate on listening to stories and taking stock of the good work going on across higher education, and seeing how it speaks to those of us who may fret from time to time about the larger "movement."

I have already written much more than I intended. I'm looking forward to our conversation, and more importantly, to sharing our work and figuring out what suggests itself from this collective and collaborative work.

Rick Battistoni

Hello Everyone :

Thanks for the opportunity to participate in this wonderful discussion and good luck for the meetings to come . It is great to be part of this organic discussion. My small part is from some of my recent work from 2004, 2005 and 2007 I shared with a number of you on my visits late last year.

Boundary Spanning and the Interface

(DeLaforce, 2004), (De laforce et al, 2005) and (Keane and Allison, 1999) identified the existence of an emerging body of published work. It related to community and regional engagement and the provision of a point of departure, specifically the idea of an interface between the University, education sector and more broadly community. What was this interface?

The term interface also surfaced in (Burkhardt, 2002, p. 146) in which it is stated that: "The adaptive capacity of higher education is not only rooted in the ability for institutions to change one by one, but in a system level capacity which depends upon a specific form of leadership. This leadership process is constructed at the boundary between the higher education at large and its interface with society."

Burkhardt goes on to suggest that the link between system wide responses to higher

education engagement requires a leadership capacity that functions at the level of ideas and values rather than a defined organisational framework.

Pedagogic Creed

Hirtle (1996) discusses Social Constructivism as having its origin in John Dewey's Pedagogic Creed (1963, p.20) in which he states "psychological and social sides of education cannot be regarded as a compromise between the two, or a superimposition one on top of the other" and positions education as coming as a result of the empowerment of the learner in a social situation resulting in the learner becoming a member of a community. Dewey believed that school is one form of community, which can help learners construct knowledge socially so that they may fully participate in the "social consciousness of the race" (Dewey, 1963, p.26).

He maintains that the only way to make learners conscious of their social heritage is for them to construct learning experiences which are fundamental to making civilization what it is, and that, through language as a mediating tool for learning, learners come to collaborate with their own and other's thoughts and feelings.

Also in Hirtle (1996) citing Schor (1992) it is raised that that social constructivism is a way of building knowledge about self, school, everyday experience, and society through reflection and meaning making. As a result one of the primary roles of constructivism is to provide democratic and critical learning which serve to open boundaries through inquiry, not through unquestioned acceptance of prevailing knowledge. Perhaps...it is the realisation that knowledge is never neutral, that the ways in which knowledge is mediated and created are as dynamic and important as the knowledge itself.

This in relation to my regional work in Australia is not only reflected by the social construct of the partners and relationship but also the application of technology in portraying and allowing the capacity to generate new knowledge and perceptions.

I hope this add to the debate.

All the best,

Wayne Delaforce

What Are We Moving Against?

One of the key characteristics of a powerful movement is its conceptual and ideological coherence. Strong movements are propelled by compelling and clearly articulated purposes. Since movements (by definition) emerge to challenge the status quo, an important question for any movement is what are we moving against?

Over the past two decades, a number of commentators, critics (and a few Jeremiah's) have pointed to the imperative for change. Page Smith bemoaned the emergence of "academic fundamentalism" which he defined as "the flight from teaching, the meretriciousness of most academic research, the disintegration of the disciplines, the alliance of universities with the Department of Defense, the National Aeronautics and Space Agency, etc., and,

more recently, with biotechnology and communications corporations, and, last but not least, the corruptions incident to 'big time' collegiate sports" (Smith, 1990 p. 1). Boyer, also argued the academy had lost its way: "I have this growing conviction that what is needed [for higher education] is not just more programs, but a larger purpose, a larger sense of mission, a larger clarity of direction in the nation's life." His vision of a broader conception of scholarship stood in direct opposition to conventional conceptions of faculty work. Other practices that members of this movement have stood in opposition to include:

- The persisting influence of the Ivory Tower : "Disciplinary guildism" (Benson, Harkavy, & Hartley, 2005) —the pressures for faculty to pursue narrow disciplinary specialization and seek knowledge for its own sake (the German university model) in order to advance professionally—has resulted in scholarly activity that often does little to practically address pressing real-world problems.
- The Corporatization of the University: The "management revolution" (Keller, 1983) that embraced the notion of student-as-customer emphasized credentialing and de-emphasized the formative aspects of education. Fears of demographic shifts, a weak economy in the 1980s, and shifting values of students (towards a more-privatized view of higher education—a college education as a ticket to a good job) led many institutions to develop new professional and vocational programs, which produced dissonance on many campuses that felt their larger historic purposes (e.g. a liberal arts education) were being abandoned. Commercialization and commodification have caused institutions of higher to behave more like businesses (e.g. partnering with corporations, launching popular degree programs, the expansion of admissions and development offices into major administrative features of the university.)
- The crisis in undergraduate teaching and de-contextualized learning: The 1970s and 1980s saw a good deal of discussion about general education. There were concerns the curriculum had lost coherence. The Banking Model of Education (as described by Paulo Freire in the Pedagogy of the Oppressed)—where faculty profess and place ideas into the heads of students predominated. Learning also seemed decontextualized—uncoupled from the real-world. This is problematic since many students grow up in middle class "bubbles" and have never encountered the poor. Further, we still live in an intensely segregated society. Popular speakers such as Parker Palmer sought to promote greater authenticity in teaching and learning. Service learning emerged, in part, as a means of providing context rich learning.
- Moral somnolence and civic disengagement : The value neutrality of the German university model (in contrast to the character-building emphasis of the English model and the earlier American models (Reuben, 1996)), raised questions of the relevance of higher education to address the pressing ethical and political challenges of our times. This was particularly evident in the university's inability to prepare students for lives of civic engagement, despite frighteningly low levels of political disengagement and widespread mistrust of government. As Frank Newman put it: "If there is a crisis in education in the United States today, it is less that test scores have declined than it is that we have failed to provide the education for citizenship that is still the most significant responsibility of the nation's schools and colleges" (Newman, 1985). Service Learning (as described in the founding purpose of Campus Compact and the preamble of the "Principals of Best Practice for Combining Service and Learning" (1989) was expressly intended to promote citizenship.)

When I consider the above factors (and there are surely many more) I'm struck by two things. First, given these early formulations of the challenges facing higher education and our democracy, I wonder how much headway we have really made? Have we come far

enough? Second, a key theme in many of these calls for change was the need to re-enliven the public purpose of higher education and to strengthen its civic aims. We certainly see plenty of examples of community-based activity. We know that rigorous service learning experiences have the capacity to instill a sense of civic agency in students: "I can make a difference in my community." That's important. But at a time when volunteering and service learning have grown we also see a precipitous decline in political knowledge and engagement. Trend data from HERI at UCLA, which are based on surveys of several hundred thousand students each year, show that the percentage of incoming students who indicated that it is "important for me to keep up to date with political affairs" dropped from 58% in 1966 to 26% in 1998. As we look across the landscape of American higher education, I think we must conclude that what has emerged is a remarkably apolitical "civic" engagement. Institutions are very comfortable encouraging students to serve their communities (and that's an important civic responsibility.) But they are much less sure about encouraging, in students, a sense of political agency—never mind political activism! Many service learning courses place students with agencies that serve the homeless or in the classrooms of struggling inner city schools but never ask them to consider the complex socio-political factors that perpetuate the status quo. What, then, can the movement do to counter this apoliticism? That, to me, seems a central question.

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Matt Hartley