

THE KETTERING FOUNDATION'S ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

# CONNECTIONS

[www.kettering.org](http://www.kettering.org)

2012

## EDUCATING FOR DEMOCRACY

Stories of  
**INNOVATION**  
in  
**HIGHER  
EDUCATION**





NEW from Kettering Foundation Press

# Democratizing Deliberation

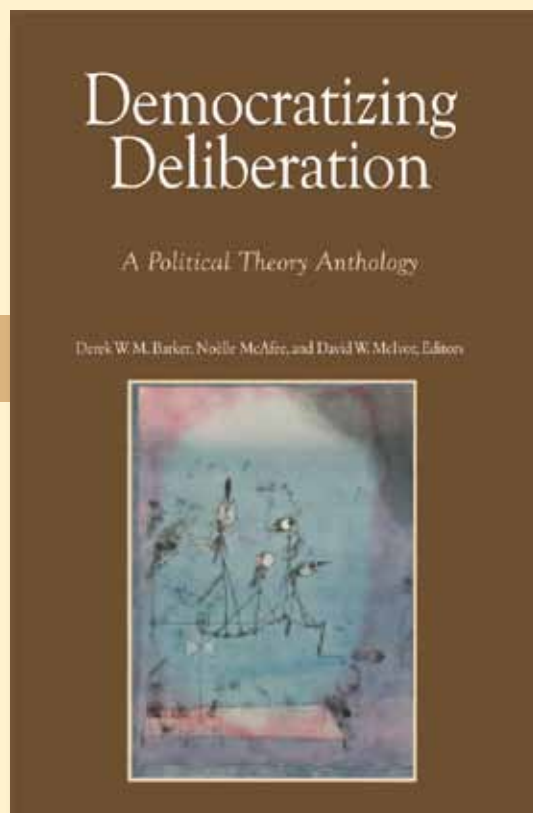
## A Political Theory Anthology

Edited by Derek W. M. Barker, Noëlle McAfee, and David W. McIvor

*Democratizing Deliberation* brings together recent and cutting-edge political theory scholarship on deliberative democracy. The collection reframes deliberative democracy to be sensitive to the deep conflicts, multiple forms of communication, and aspirations for civic agency that characterize real public deliberation. In so doing, the book addresses many of the most common challenges to the theory and practice of deliberative democracy.

Kettering Foundation Press | 2012

\$15.95 • 184 pages • ISBN 978-0-923993-41-2



To read excerpts and purchase this book, visit [www.kettering.org](http://www.kettering.org).

The Kettering Foundation is a nonprofit, operating foundation rooted in the American tradition of cooperative research. Kettering's primary research question is, what makes democracy work as it should? Kettering's research is distinctive because it is conducted from the perspective of citizens and focuses on what people can do collectively to address problems affecting their lives, their communities, and their nation. The foundation seeks to identify and address the challenges to making democracy work as it should through interrelated program areas that focus on citizens, communities, and institutions. The foundation collaborates with an extensive network of community groups, professional associations, researchers, scholars, and citizens around the world. Established in 1927 by inventor Charles F. Kettering, the foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization that does not make grants but engages in joint research with others. For more information about KF research and publications, see the Kettering Foundation's website at [www.kettering.org](http://www.kettering.org).

*Connections* is published by the Kettering Foundation, 200 Commons Road, Dayton, Ohio 45459-2799. The articles in *Connections* reflect the views of the authors and not necessarily those of the foundation, its directors, or its officers.

#### Editors

Derek W. M. Barker  
Melinda Gilmore

#### Copy Editor

Lisa Boone-Berry

#### Design and Production

Long's Graphic Design, Inc.

#### Illustrations

Long's Graphic Design, Inc.

# CONNECTIONS

## C O N T E N T S



- 4 **Reviewing Kettering Foundation Studies of the Role of Higher Education in American Democracy**  
*David Mathews*
- 8 **Higher Education and Our Collective Future: Where Do Citizens Stand?**  
*Jean Johnson*
- 12 **College Students and Politics: Fed Up or Fired Up?**  
*Jack Becker, Danielle Desjardins, Dwitiya Jawher Neethi, and Alice Diebel*
- 16 **Reimagining the Civic Life of Non-College-Bound Youth**  
*Wanda Madison Minor*
- 20 **Living Democracy: From Service Learning to Political Engagement**  
*Alexandra Robinson*
- 24 **Deliberative Pedagogy: An Education that Matters**  
*Joni Doherty*
- 28 **The Civic Arts: A Conversation with Bernie Murchland**  
*Interviewed by Keith Melville*
- 31 **Community Colleges and the Work of Democracy**  
*Bernie Ronan*
- 34 **Beyond the Ivory Tower: The Civic Aspirations of Faculty**  
*Claire Snyder-Hall*
- 37 **Turning the Tide on Poverty: Shifting the University-Community Relationship through Cooperative Extension**  
*Alice Diebel*
- 40 **A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future**  
*David W. McIvor*



# A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future

A report from the National Task Force on  
Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement

Association of American Colleges and  
Universities, 2012

In January 2012, higher education leaders from around the country were invited to the White House for a conference to launch a national conversation on the importance of civic learning. A key item on the agenda was the release of the report, *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future*, a national call to action for post-secondary institutions of education with regards to their civic-engagement programs and curricula. The report, prepared by the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, reflects a series of discussions between 134 leaders and practitioners of civic learning, many of whom are part of Kettering's network of collaborative researchers. Civic engage-

ment has recently achieved an increased prominence within conversations about higher education, and the report is a genuine landmark. As highlighted by Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's closing remarks, the event and report reflect not only a new level of national visibility and legitimacy for civic-engagement initiatives but also a sense of urgency for higher education to play a part in addressing the widespread loss of confidence in our political system.

The rhetoric of civic engagement has been steadily expanding in higher education over the past several decades. As the task force report acknowledges, however, the question at this "crucible" moment is whether this rhetoric can be matched with practical experiments on the ground that seek to improve democratic capacity for students, campus communities, and the broader communities in which institutions of higher education are situated. The question for Kettering is not whether

institutions of higher education are finding ways to be successful according to their own missions, but instead whether they are playing a role in making democracy work as it should. And from this perspective, there is much to admire within the task force's report.

For instance, the report argues that higher education will only fulfill its democratic mission if civic engagement shifts from being a marginal concern to an "ethos" that pervades all aspects of the institution. Higher education's longstanding commitment to civic education and community service must be combined with an emphasis on programs and curricula that can improve democratic capacity through public work and collective action. Throughout the report the oftentimes-anodyne emphasis on "civics" is supplemented by the rhetoric of democracy. For instance, the report acknowledges that basic civic literacy is important, but that 21st-century democratic engagement requires the integration of civic knowledge, skills, and values to inform concerted public actions with others. In other words, public problem solving within and beyond campus communities is seen as an absolutely essential component of civic learning. This marks a significant shift from the earlier emphasis on occasion-

---

---

## A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future

al service to the surrounding community towards a new emphasis on public work and action *with* community members.

In making claims for a broader and more pervasive emphasis on democratic engagement within higher education, the task force report offers a four-fold framework that places traditional concerns, such as civic literacy and service learning, alongside a focus on collective action and public problem solving. By including collective action with the traditional foci of civic engagement, the report acknowledges something that the Kettering Foundation has discovered repeatedly in its research—namely, that civic learning is most effective when it is active learning achieved through sustained practical experiences. As the authors of the report put it, democratic knowledge can only be “honed through hands-on, face-to-face, active engagement in the midst of differing perspectives about how to address common problems that affect the well-being of the nation and the world.” In other words, the report argues that informed, engaged citizenship requires participation in an ecology of practices that range from voting to deliberation and public action.

As examples of programs within universities that are making the link between knowledge and action, the task force report cites ongoing efforts at several campuses that have participated in Kettering's research. At Franklin Pierce University, the New England Center for Civic Life, directed by Joni Doherty, has used inclusive forms of public deliberation to address local issues surrounding community development (for more on this work, see Doherty's article on p. 24). Similarly, Kansas State University's Institute for Civic Discourse and Democracy has connected community partners to make local policy decisions more deliberative and inclusive. Efforts at Gulf Coast Community College have focused on bringing diverse elements of the local community together to deliberate on various redistricting scenarios. And at Maricopa Community Colleges, the Center for Civic Participation, under the leadership of Bernie Ronan and Alberto Olivas, focuses on student, faculty, staff, and community engagement in public policy issues in the area (see Ronan's article, p. 31). Each of these centers mobi-

lizes university resources and actors to engage their broader communities.

The task force report also cites well-known efforts, such as Wake Forest University's Democracy Fellows program, a four-year effort that included classroom learning as well as practical experiences in organizing and conducting deliberative forums both on campus and in the Winston-Salem community. As reported in the Kettering Foundation Press book *Speaking of Politics*, Wake Forest professors Katy J. Harriger and Jill J. McMillan discovered that students exposed to deliberative pedagogies held more robust political dispositions at the conclusion of their course of study than a control group exposed to a conventional curriculum. The task force report cites studies like Harriger and McMillan's as evidence of civic engagement's effectiveness in enhancing both students' learning outcomes and their democratic capacity as young citizens.

The emphasis on learning outcomes reflects the report's acknowledgement that civic outcomes are one of a number of concerns for higher education institutions today. Most important, perhaps, the discussion of democratic engagement competes for oxygen with the concerns surrounding career preparation and degree completion. In an age of economic uncertainty, colleges and universities are being compelled to address long-term national priorities of producing a competent and well-trained workforce—and to do so in a manner that reduces the escalating costs of higher education for students, families, and legislatures. The task force report does not neglect this trend; in fact, the report refers to a “civic recession,” drawing a direct link between concerns with economic performance and civic engagement. The report argues that instead of being mutually exclusive, the priorities of retaining and graduating a higher percentage of students, preparing graduates for productive careers, and fostering engaged and informed citizens are largely in sync with one another. The report cites growing evidence that participation in

civic-engagement programs increases student retention and graduation rates. They also cite employer surveys that show that the skills associated with democratic engagement—critical thinking, the ability to deliberate across differences, and collaborative decision making—are those that employers wish higher education would emphasize more. According to the report, there is no tension between efforts to address the economic and civic recessions at the same time, and indeed, the efforts may complement one another.

The report concludes with a call to action for universities and colleges to develop “civic investment plans” that could begin to achieve the goal of making civic engagement a pervasive ethos on campuses and within surrounding communities. Each institution of higher education has a variety of actors who could enact portions of this ambitious agenda, including students, faculty, administrators, and

---

---

**The report argues that higher education will only fulfill its democratic mission if civic engagement shifts from being a marginal concern to an “ethos” that pervades all aspects of the institution.**

student-affairs professionals. The task force report serves a valuable function insofar as it shows how each of these individual actions and actors could productively cofunction as part of a larger effort at fostering a civic ethos and advancing public action in local, national, and global contexts. At this crucible moment, the challenge is not just to create and sustain small-scale initiatives—however successful these efforts might become. The real challenge is to make democratic engagement and citizenship pervasive phenomena not only in the many institutions of higher education, but also within the broader polity.

— reviewed by David W. McIvor

*David W. McIvor is a research associate at the Kettering Foundation. He can be reached at [dmcivor@kettering.org](mailto:dmcivor@kettering.org).*



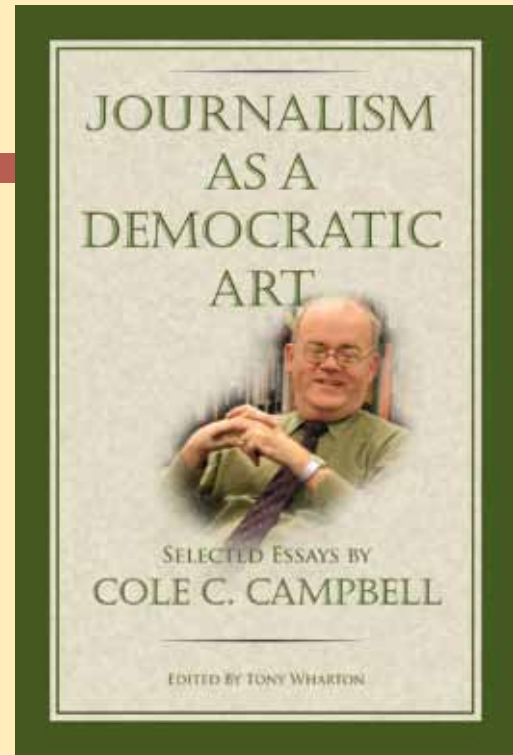
# NEW from Kettering

## ***Journalism as a Democratic Art: Selected Essays*** **by Cole C. Campbell**

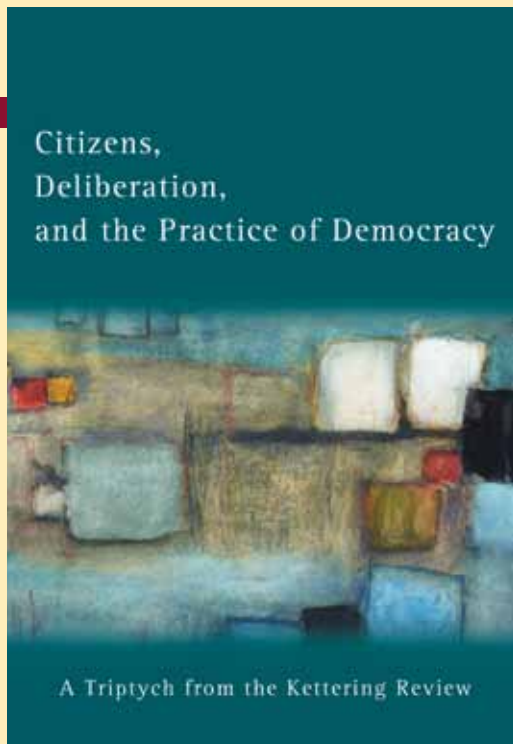
Edited by Tony Wharton

*Journalism as a Democratic Art expresses at its heart Cole Campbell's belief that "people expect the press to help their communities solve problems." As one-time editor of the Virginian-Pilot in Norfolk, Virginia, and then the Post-Dispatch in St. Louis, Missouri, Campbell worked to align his profession with that belief, often facing considerable resistance from other journalists.*

*Campbell's essays address a variety of subjects, including a partly finished dictionary for journalists; timely essays written in the months after Hurricane Katrina and 9/11; and an interview by Jay Rosen, longtime professor of journalism at New York University.*



Kettering Foundation Press | 2012  
**\$15.95** • 196 pages • ISBN 978-0-923993-40-5



## ***Citizens, Deliberation, and the Practice of Democracy: A Triptych from the Kettering Review***

*Citizens, Deliberation, and the Practice of Democracy brings together writing by 19 leading thinkers on the contemporary challenges of democracy. These provocative essays, first published in three issues of the Kettering Review to celebrate 25 years of the National Issues Forums, challenge readers to rethink conventional notions of democracy, public deliberation, and citizenship.*

Kettering Foundation Press | 2012  
**\$15.95** • 236 pages • ISBN 978-0-923993-44-3

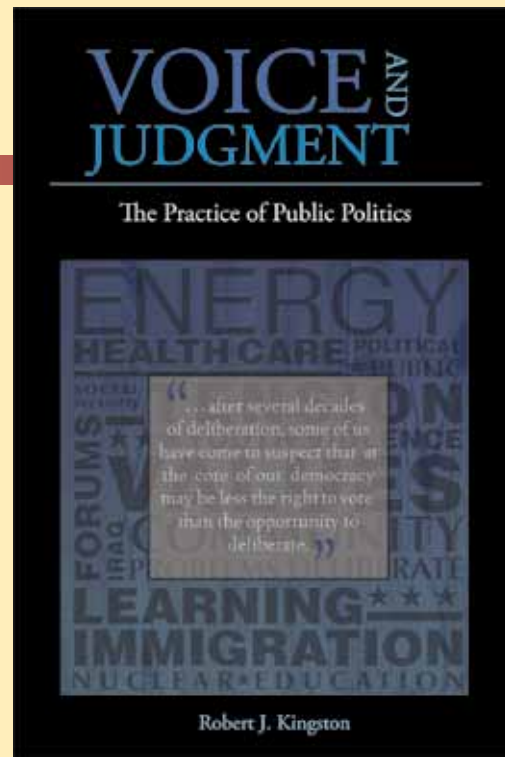
To read excerpts and learn more about these books and other publications, visit [www.kettering.org](http://www.kettering.org).

# Foundation Press

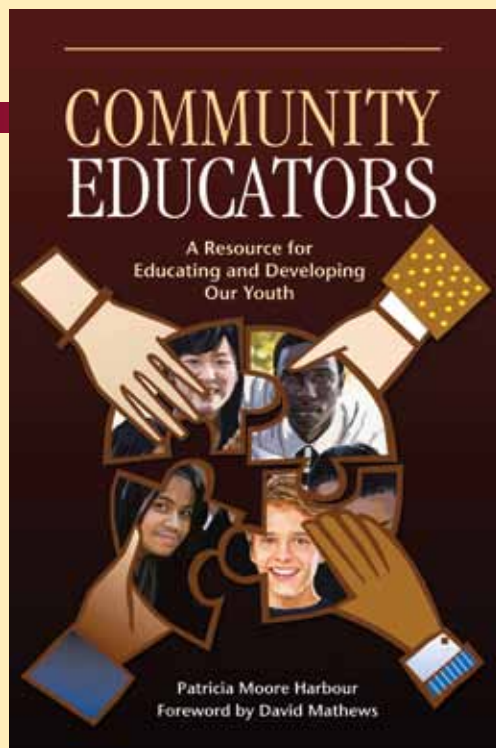
## ***Voice and Judgment: The Practice of Public Politics***

By Robert J. Kingston

*"We are victims of argument and instruments, from time to time, of circumstance or the influence of others' whims. Our civic movement, however, is from a state of anxiety, puzzlement, blame, defensiveness, or anger, toward the place where contraries meet, where unavoidable tensions remind us that no life is lived without risk . . . or collaboration. A deliberative public begins with opinions but shares experiences; it recognizes shared concerns or 'values' in unexpected, sometimes unfamiliar circumstances; it responds to the divisive with restraint. . . . Public deliberation reveals not a verdict but the making of a 'public,' the formulation of a public will that can be described and put to use."*



Kettering Foundation Press | 2012  
\$15.95 • 272 pages • ISBN 978-0-923993-42-9



## ***Community Educators: A Resource For Educating and Developing Our Youth***

By Patricia Moore Harbour

*Community Educators asserts that the relationship between education, community, and democracy are inseparable and illustrates that education is broader than just schooling. Current thinking about education is challenged and reveals how the public participates in the education and development of youth. This book is a call for action and responsibility—both individual and collective—to transform education beyond simply reforming schools.*

Kettering Foundation Press | 2012  
\$15.95 • 184 pages • ISBN 978-0-923993-41-2



© Copyright 2012 by the Kettering Foundation

200 Commons Road, Dayton, Ohio 45459-2799; (937) 434-7300

444 North Capitol Street NW, Washington, DC 20001; (202) 393-4478

6 East 39th Street, New York, New York 10016; (212) 686-7016

[www.kettering.org](http://www.kettering.org)

Nonprofit Organization U.S. Postage PAID Bloomington, IN Permit No. 26
---

---

Kettering Foundation  
200 Commons Road  
Dayton, OH 45459-2799