

THE KETTERING FOUNDATION'S ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

CONNECTIONS

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2012

EDUCATING FOR DEMOCRACY

Stories of
INNOVATION
in
**HIGHER
EDUCATION**





NEW from Kettering Foundation Press

Democratizing Deliberation

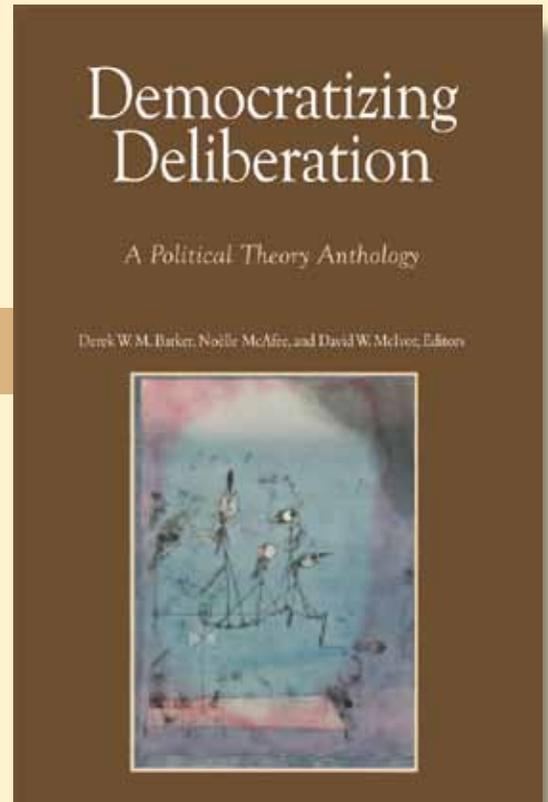
A Political Theory Anthology

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.

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.

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Higher Education and Our Collective Future: Where Do Citizens Stand?

Jean Johnson

In the history of higher education in America, every major transformation has occurred in the context of larger social transformations. Early colleges in the founding era, the development of the land-grant system, and the expansion of higher education under the GI Bill—each reflected citizens’ changing views about the purposes and possibilities of higher education. For higher education to reclaim its civic identity today, it is crucial to understand more about how citizens think about its mission. Do they see the university as a civic institution? And if they do, what aspects of that mission do they value most?

To explore whether civic engagement in higher education resonates with widely shared public values, the Kettering Foundation is currently seeking to encourage and share in a national dialogue on higher education and the future of our nation, along with key higher education partners and the National Issues Forums Institute (NIFI), a nonpartisan, nationwide network of locally sponsored, deliberative public forums. Our hope is that a new issue guide, *Shaping Our Future: How Should Higher Education Help Us Create the Society We Want?*, will advance deliberation and dialogue on higher education’s civic mission.

Where Is the Dialogue on Higher Education’s Civic Mission?

It is no secret that most Americans see higher education as an important institution in American society. Majorities see a college degree as a virtual prerequisite for getting a good job. Surveys show most parents want their children to go to college, and most high school students say that is their goal. This is a major shift. According to a recent Gallup/Phi Delta Kappan poll, in 1978, just 38 percent of Americans considered college “very important,” compared to 75 percent today.

However, in such surveys, citizens are rarely asked to focus on the role colleges and universities play in our democracy or society overall. The natural tendency is for people to respond in terms of their immediate individual concerns. Not surprisingly, many are worried about college costs and student debt—and for good reason. These are issues that hit people close

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to home. But most Americans have not spent much time thinking about whether colleges and universities can and should do more to strengthen our civic culture and help communities and the nation achieve long-term social, economic, and political goals.

If citizens had the chance to think more about the role of higher education in our collective future, what would they say? Right now, we do not know, but it is possible that people would respond differently if questions were posed to them plainly and directly in terms of major challenges facing the country—and if they had clear choices and explicit trade-offs to consider.

Launching a National Conversation: *Shaping Our Future*

In the coming year, citizens across the country will have that opportunity by means of a joint effort of NIFI and a new higher education organization, the American Commonwealth Partnership (ACP), a coalition, including the American Democracy Project of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities; The Democracy Commitment (TDC), a network of community colleges; Imagining America, a consortium of colleges and universities encouraging “scholars and artists in public life”; and Campus Compact.

Through this initiative, students, faculty, administrators, employers, and members of the general public will have the chance to reflect on how colleges and universities might help the country tackle some of its most vexing problems. Our hope is that, through this partnership, higher education will be a central topic in deliberative forums in the NIFI network and on college campuses around the country.

The American Commonwealth Partnership was launched in January 2012 at the “For Democracy’s Future” conference at the White House. The event called for a national conversation on civic learning and the role of higher education and featured, among others, US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, Senior Advisor to the President Valerie Jarrett, director of the Center for Democracy and Citizenship at Augsburg College and National Coordinator of the American Commonwealth

Partnership Harry Boyte, and Kettering Foundation president David Mathews.

In spring 2012, NIFI and ACP joined forces to prepare, publish, and distribute the new citizen issue guide, *Shaping Our*

Future: How Should Higher Education Help Us Create the Society We Want? It is available for use on campuses and in communities across the country as part of a yearlong national conversation project.

NEW ISSUE GUIDE FROM NIF AND ACP

Shaping Our Future

How Should Higher Education Help Us Create the Society We Want?

The diverse system of US higher education—including public and private universities, smaller four-year independent colleges, two-year community colleges, for-profit schools, and others—already serves a number of important social purposes. But this guide focuses on the future. It takes up this fundamental question: How should higher education help us create the society we want?



National Issues Forums Institute | 2012
12 pages • ISBN 978-0-945639-54-1



*To learn more
about this issue
guide, visit
www.nifi.org.*

Global Competitiveness, Values, and Fairness: Three Critical Problems in Our Society

This new issue guide asks citizens to reflect on what colleges, universities, community colleges, trade and vocational schools, and other such institutions could do to help us create the society we want. It explores three major challenges to our collective well-being: 1) helping the economy stay internationally competitive; 2) strengthening shared values like responsibility, integrity, and respecting and listen-

ing to one another; and 3) doing much more to ensure that our society is fair. The guide then presents citizens with corresponding ways of thinking about higher education's role in confronting these challenges. Like other NIF guides, without privileging any of the options, *Shaping Our Future* finally asks people to consider the tensions and trade-offs involved in pursuing each of these approaches.

encourage more students to study math, the sciences, business, and foreign languages, making these subjects part of a core curriculum, students whose interests and talents lie elsewhere might become discouraged and drop out. If we reallocate funds to support superior science and engineering faculty and facilities, there would be less support for the arts and humanities—and less choice for students. Moreover, increasing our expertise in science and technology by itself may fail to address, and could even exacerbate, the social problems of a competitive economy, including the loss of good jobs here in the United States and a growing gap between rich and poor.

Nearly all of the respondents in the focus groups . . . agreed that strengthening our ability to work together to solve problems is an urgent need, although most did not immediately see what role higher education could play in this area.

ing to one another; and 3) doing much more to ensure that our society is fair. The guide then presents citizens with corresponding ways of thinking about higher education's role in confronting these challenges. Like other NIF guides, without privileging any of the options, *Shaping Our Future* finally asks people to consider the tensions and trade-offs involved in pursuing each of these approaches.

First, the book proposes that colleges and universities—including community colleges—could bolster US global economic competitiveness by helping us recapture our leadership in science and technology. Countries like China and India are transforming their higher education systems to educate more young people with high-tech skills in science and engineering. Supporters of this approach believe it is one of the best routes we could take to keep our economy growing. But there are risks and trade-offs. If we

encourage more students to study math, the sciences, business, and foreign languages, making these subjects part of a core curriculum, students whose interests and talents lie elsewhere might become discouraged and drop out. If we reallocate funds to support superior science and engineering faculty and facilities, there would be less support for the arts and humanities—and less choice for students. Moreover, increasing our expertise in science and technology by itself may fail to address, and could even exacerbate, the social problems of a competitive economy, including the loss of good jobs here in the United States and a growing gap between rich and poor.

The second option asks colleges and universities to do more to strengthen core principles like responsibility and integrity and respect for others in order to help create a culture shift from “me” to “we.” It responds to what many Americans see as an epidemic of declining values: division, mistrust, and the inability to come together as

a society and get things done. Because higher education is where many young adults develop their sense of what's expected of them in the broader society, this option calls for colleges and universities to teach and reinforce high standards of honesty, integrity, and behavior. It also proposes that students study a broad range of subjects including history, science, literature, government, economics, philosophy, and the arts to help develop a better understanding of how different people think and how our society works. Finally, according to this option, every student should have some practical experience in community and collaborative problem solving. One key trade-off to this approach is that it gives colleges and universities a greater voice in defining what constitutes moral, ethical, and civil behavior. Many say this is a role for families, communities, and religious organizations and that higher education should steer

clear of politics, morality, and religion. Many also worry that it will result in less emphasis on teaching the high-tech skills needed in the US economy.

Because graduating from college opens the door to advancement and economic security in our society, the third option speaks to growing concerns about fairness. In the wake of the financial crisis and rising perceptions of economic inequality and policies that favor the wealthy, more questions are being raised about whether American society is really as fair as we like to think it is. This choice argues that higher education, along with government and taxpayers, can and should do more to ensure that all Americans have a genuine chance to attend and graduate from college—and without accumulating huge debt. According to this option, financial aid should go first and foremost to lower- and middle-income students, and colleges should provide more mentoring and more effective remedial courses for students who struggle. Plus, colleges and universities need to control costs by offering more courses online and closing duplicative programs and departments. But again there are trade-offs. This approach requires taxpayers and higher education institutions to devote more money to grants and scholarships, and while colleges and universities may be able to do more to control costs, public higher education has already been hit with big budget cuts. The danger, of course, is that a substantial commitment to increase access and keep tuition costs low would inevitably result in compromises in quality, such as larger class sizes, online instruction, and fewer support services for students.

The Conversation Begins

To develop and test the choices and trade-offs in the new issue guide, the NIFI team reviewed public-opinion research on higher education, along with reports on the perspectives of key stakeholder groups, such as college presidents, faculty, trustees, and employers. The team also conducted exploratory focus groups with typical citizens and with college students, faculty, and administrators. The focus groups in particular suggested that, when people are given the chance to consider

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and weigh competing ideas about higher education's priorities, many see multiple benefits for the broader society. Nearly all of the respondents in the focus groups, for example, agreed that strengthening our ability to work together to solve problems is an urgent need, although most did not immediately see what role higher education could play in this area, and many saw strengthening the economy as even more important. At the same time, many were drawn to some of the specifics, especially the idea of students having a well-rounded and broad education, along with offering more courses and fieldwork that emphasize problem solving and the ability to work with people with differing backgrounds and opinions.

After developing the options and the trade-offs, we tested how people respond to them in real-life conversation in typical forum settings. This spring, a special Civic Summit was brought together to honor the long career of retiring president Judith Ramaley and to pilot test an early draft of the issue framing at Winona State College in Minnesota. At Georgia College, a public liberal arts university about two hours south of Atlanta, faculty, students, and other participants deliberated on these issues as part of a field test conducted while the guide was under development.



Gregg Kauffman of the Government and Sociology Department and Jan Clark of English and Rhetoric organized and comoderated the session. Students and professors exchanged views on what kinds of courses should be part of the core curriculum and what might happen if more science and math were required. Some

students talked enthusiastically about community projects they participated in that helped them develop skills in collaborative problem solving, but most participants believed that they could do more to ensure that these projects truly involve community members. There was also frank discussion about the degree to which faculty can help struggling students if they are not putting in their best effort. The discussion showed just how much there is to talk about.

In his remarks at the White House event in January, Secretary Duncan said, "Our young people have an appetite, they're committed, they want to be engaged. . . . But somehow we've walked away from providing those opportunities." The first step in giving young Americans that opportunity is starting a serious conversation about higher education's role beyond what it offers to individual students in their careers and personal lives. It is time for citizens to refocus on higher education's role in strengthening our civic culture and helping us work together to create the society we want.

Jean Johnson is a member of the board of the National Issues Forums Institute and a senior fellow at Public Agenda. She can be reached at jjohnson@publicagenda.org.





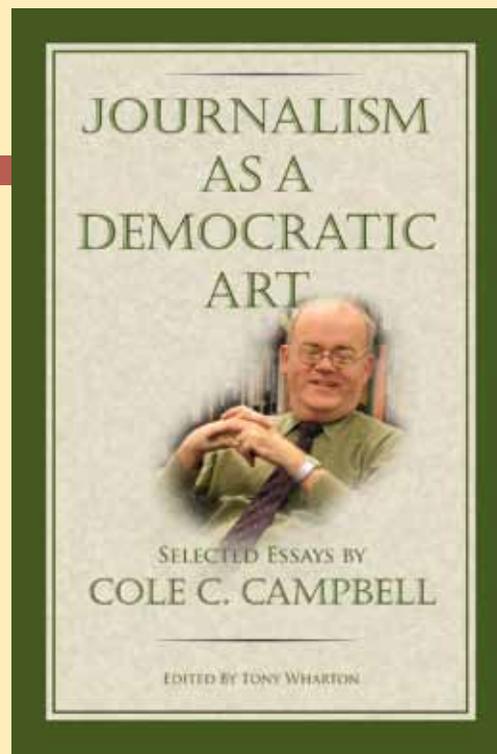
NEW from Kettering

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

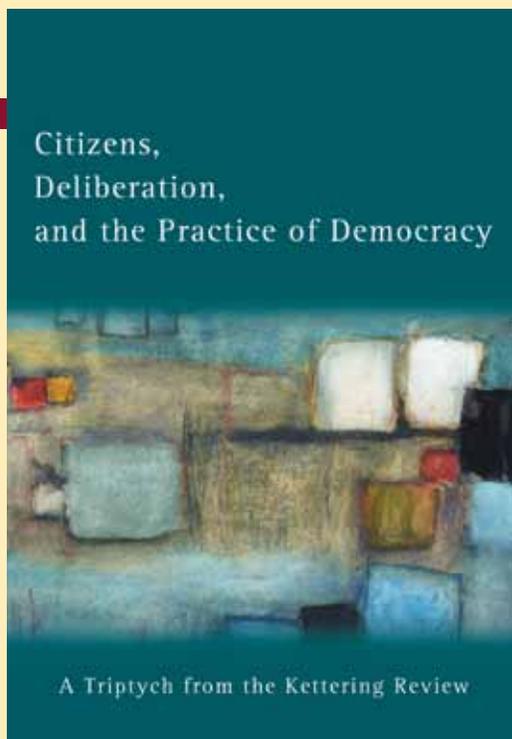
Edited by Tony Wharton

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

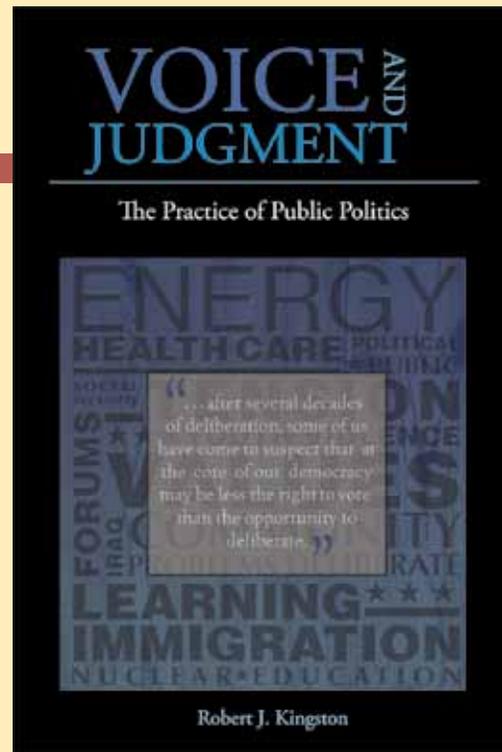
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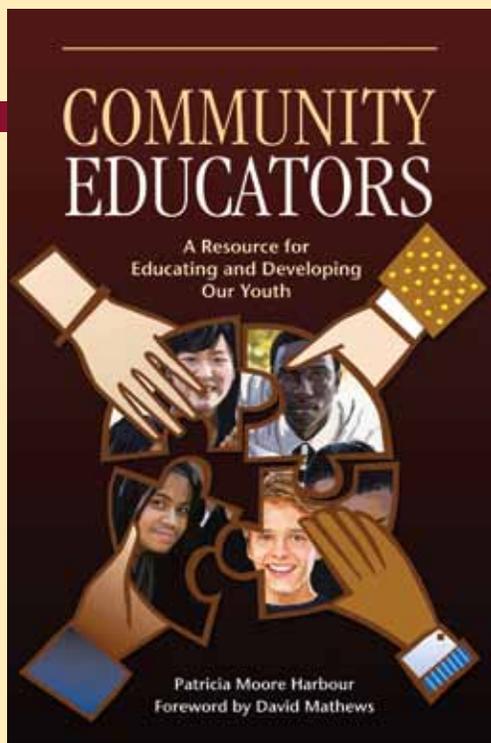
Voice and Judgment: The Practice of Public Politics

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."



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\$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.

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