

CONNECTIONS

VOLUME XV

ISSUE 1

August 2004

- Exploring the Public-Academy Relationshippage 2
- The Civic Mission of Higher Educationpage 7
- Revitalizing the University of Minnesota's Civic Missionpage 8
- The Role of Historically Black Colleges and Universities in Building Civic Responsibilitypage 11
- The New Engagement: From Community Relations to Community Partnershipspage 13
- The Public Practice of Scholarship and the Production of Knowledgepage 17
- Apple IPM in Massachusetts: Public Scholarship in Actionpage 18
- College Students as Citizenspage 22
- Fraternal Futures: Empowering Students to Shape the Future of Greek Organizations.page 23
- Increasing Student Civic Engagement through Balanced Democratic Dialogue.page 25
- June Board Summarypage 28
- An Update on Public Journalismpage 29
- The Footbridge Forumpage 31
- New Stories for Television: Promoting Public Judgment in Colombia.page 32
- Books Worth Readingpage 34



The Role of Historically Black Colleges and Universities in Building Civic Responsibility

By *Beverly W. Hogan*

It is no longer news that, in recent years, citizens seem to have lost the zeal for active participation in the problem-solving and decision-making processes essential to the proper working of democratic politics. Less than a third of eligible voters participate in the electoral process. Political participation is viewed by many Americans as futile. And a profound sense of cynicism and lack of trust toward political leaders and the political process permeates our society.

It is in this context that many institutions of higher learning are revisiting the roles they might play in rebuilding the foundations of American civil life. Perhaps nowhere has this educational goal been so deeply embedded as in the missions of historically black colleges and universities. These schools have traditionally played a key role in building and promoting citizenship and civic responsibility through their active involvement in community problem solving. Located as they were, in communities beset by social ills, these institutions were compelled, in a sense, to improve the quality of life in the neighborhoods of which they were a part. It was a role driven in many ways by the need to balance the scales of justice and equality through the production of educated, informed, and concerned citizens.

For African Americans, education was the pathway to freedom and a more level playing field, thus, education was connected with citizenship and the uplifting of one's people. As a result, students left those institutions imbued with the understanding that they were responsible for lending

their skills to the development of a more vibrant and sustained democracy, not just for themselves but for the larger community.

A recent research project examined the missions, historical trends, and civic practices of five black colleges and universities in Mississippi: Alcorn State University, Jackson State University, Mississippi Valley State University, Rust College, and Tougaloo College. The study reveals that, institutionally, the dedication to educating students to become responsible, active citizens has not flagged.

All of these colleges and universities have formed partnerships with community organizations in a variety of fields, including health, literacy, economic development, recreation, education, housing, and many others.

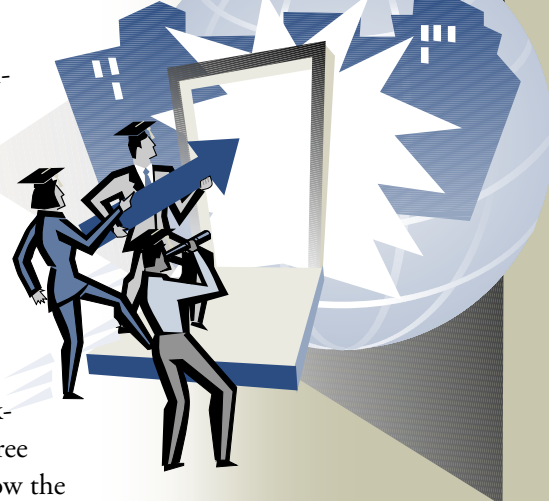
Among the many public service programs sponsored by Alcorn State, for example, are the Saturday Science Academy, the Environmental Education and Stewardship Program, and the Housing Partnership Agreement, created to increase the availability of low-income housing units. All of these activities have faculty leadership and student involvement and are integrated into the academic components of the university.

A part of the mission statement of Jackson State University is to "provide educational services, including technical assistance, workshops, training programs, both degree and nondegree offerings, which allow the university to extend its human, cultural and physical resources into the surrounding urban community." Administrators



Beverly W. Hogan

CIVIC MISSION AND ENGAGEMENT



Like their fellow collegians around the country . . . students from black colleges and universities have a distinctly jaundiced view of politics.

here believe that, for an urban university to be viable, it has to be a part of the community.

Tougaloo College, the cradle of the civil rights movement in Mississippi, has a rich history of community engagement. Its students have traditionally been involved with social issues, voter education, political campaigns, and policy development. Because of its history, Tougaloo College serves a dual role in Mississippi both as an educational institution and as a social and community development center. It is an increasingly important resource for the social, economic, civic, and cultural development not only of African Americans but also of the state as a whole.

Without exception, administrators at all five schools believe firmly that there is a role for higher education in building and promoting citizenship and civic responsibility.

But what do students think? Like their fellow collegians around the country — and, indeed, like adults of all ages — students from black colleges and universities have a distinctly jaundiced view of politics. They do not believe there is much chance of their voices being heard. They do not believe that political participation will make much difference. And they share the widespread disinterest in the political life of the country that infects our society at large.

And what do they view as the role of colleges in building and promoting civic responsibility?

To gain some perspective on this question, students from Jackson State University and Tougaloo College were recruited to attend a deliberative forum on the subject of “Politics for the Twenty-first Century: What Should Be Done on Campus?” The group was made up of young African American men and women, ranging from first- through fourth-year students.

Students generally agreed that preparing students for jobs and contributing to economic development through basic and applied research are higher education’s essential purposes. Their views support

the studies that say most students enroll in college primarily to get a good job and have a better life. They do *not* see the connection between contributing to the civic good and their individual quest for a better quality of life, although older students are more open to the view that becoming a member of a larger community brings with it some responsibility to improve the community.

Black colleges and universities have historically maintained working partnerships with their communities. These partnerships and involvement were shared in the classrooms and students were engaged in the process. At one time, this led many students to leave school firmly committed to making a contribution to the betterment of society.

But the stakes are not as high for African American students today as they were a generation ago, and so citizenship and civic responsibility are not meaningful terms to them. In this, they resemble students throughout the nation. Recent studies show that even though more and more colleges are requiring that their students become involved in “service learning” and “community service,” such experiences are not leading students to make the connection to the active duties of citizenship and civic responsibility.

Despite the discouraging findings, however, black colleges and universities should not retreat from their historical roles. Indeed, they might provide models for American higher education across the board. Engagement with their communities is as critical today as it ever was — if not more so.

As was so eloquently stated in proceedings from the Presidents’ Leadership Colloquium Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education, “This country cannot afford to educate a generation that acquires knowledge without ever understanding how that knowledge can benefit society or how to influence democratic decision making.”

Beverly W. Hogan is the president of Tougaloo College. She can be reached by E-mail at beverly.bogan@pop.tougaloo.edu.

The Kettering Foundation, chartered in 1927, is an operating foundation — not a grant-giving foundation — rooted in the American tradition of inventive research. Its founder, Charles F. Kettering, holder of more than 200 patents, is best known for his invention of the automobile self-starter. He was interested, above all, in seeking practical answers to “the problems behind the problems.” The foundation today continues in that tradition. The objective of the research now — the study of what helps democracy work as it should. Six major Kettering programs are designed to shed light on what is required for strengthening public life. Kettering is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) research corporation supported by a \$250 million endowment.

How to Order Kettering Foundation Publications

To request a *KF Publications Catalog*, call 1-800-600-4060, send a FAX to 1-937-435-7367, or write:

Kettering Foundation
 Order Department
 P. O. Box 41626
 Dayton, OH 45441

Name _____

Title _____

Organization _____

Street _____

City _____

State _____ ZIP _____

Phone (_____) _____

For more information about KF research and publications, see the Kettering Foundation’s Web site at www.kettering.org.

Connections is published by the Kettering Foundation, 200 Commons Road, Dayton, Ohio 45459-2799.

Unless expressly stated to the contrary, the articles in Connections reflect the views of the authors and not necessarily those of the foundation, its trustees, or officers.

Those who contributed to producing this issue include:

Editor...

Ilse Tebbetts

Program staff...

Maxine Thomas

John Dedrick

Deborah Witte

Graphic Design

& Desktop Publishing...

Long’s Graphic Design, Inc.

Copy Editor...

Betty Frecker

Assistant to the Publisher...

Valerie Breidenbach

Publisher...

Kenneth A. Brown

LGD-0881-KF-15500-MP-07-04

*Kettering
 Foundation*

© Copyright 2004 by the Kettering Foundation

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

444 North Capitol Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001 (202) 393-4478

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

Kettering Foundation
 200 Commons Road
 Dayton, OH 45459-2799

Nonprofit
 Organization
 U.S. Postage
 PAID
 Dayton, OH
 Permit No. 638