The Higher Education Exchange is founded on a thought articulated by Thomas Jefferson in 1820:

I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education.

In the tradition of Jefferson, the Higher Education Exchange agrees that a central goal of higher education is to help make democracy possible by preparing citizens for public life. The Higher Education Exchange is part of a movement to strengthen higher education’s democratic mission and foster a more democratic culture throughout American society. Working in this tradition, the Higher Education Exchange publishes case studies, analyses, news, and ideas about efforts within higher education to develop more democratic societies.
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FOREWORD
By Deborah Witte

Do you like to start a book by glancing through the last few pages? I’m not one who does, but I hear there are such people. With this issue of the *Higher Education Exchange*, I urge you to do just that and begin with David Mathews’ piece, “Who Are the Citizens We Serve? A View from the Wetlands of Democracy.” In this piece, Mathews asks—much as I did in last year’s issue—why higher education doesn’t see the public. In that issue, we shared stories from folks who were trying to make higher education more aware of the public. We continue with more of those stories in this issue.

In our research we are finding that, not only does higher education not see the public; when the public, in turn, looks at higher education, it sees mostly malaise, inefficiencies, expense, and unfulfilled promises. And yet the authors in this volume tell of bright spots in higher education where experiments in working with and for the public are taking place. In different ways, these experiments reveal the public that is visible when seen through the lens of a citizen-centered democracy. If you’ve been a reader of this journal for very long, you know that at Kettering we embrace experiments. (Must have something to do with Charles F. Kettering, our founder!) And so, we share stories from these experimenters—some about service learning, others about professionalism, and still others about civic engagement. They are a testimony that the public does indeed exist and is worth engaging. The issue begins with a piece by Claire Snyder-Hall. She examines faculty “public happiness,” a term coined by Kettering to describe the sense of flourishing that comes from engaging with others in work that has public relevance. She finds that when faculty undertake civic engagement work, they may be busy and overworked, but they feel they are more effective with students and better connected to colleagues and communities; they see themselves as energized and happy.

David Brown, coeditor of the *Higher Education Exchange*, shares an excerpt from his most recent book, *America’s Culture of Professionalism: Past, Present, and Prospects*. In it, he chastises professionals in academe who encourage students to seek status and
create dependence rather than nurture the capacities of those they will serve. He strongly asserts, “Nothing could be more misleading than the proposition that the public world rightfully belongs to ‘professionals.’” Professionalism, he suggests, often prevents faculty and administrators from seeing an active, engaged public.

In a piece entitled “Faculty, Citizens, and Expertise in Democracy,” Ted Alter and his colleagues also struggle with the implications of professionalism. They attempt to illuminate what the public looks like from the perspective of faculty engaged in research with the community. Gathering preliminary data from a small pilot study, Alter, et al. suggest that it is in practice that the public becomes visible. And they urge all scholars to foster a more nuanced view of citizens, a view that puts both citizens and scholars in the role of learners.

Adam Weinberg, president of Denison University, shares his perspectives on the promises and perils of education in the 21st century in an interview with David Brown. The college’s connection to community is important to Weinberg and he seeks to share this connection with students—and their parents. He wants the students to be prepared, after their four-year college experience, for “lives marked by personal, professional, and civic success.”

Lorlene Hoyt provides a picture of the ever-changing service-learning movement around the world in “University Civic Engagement: A Global Perspective.” While U.S. universities have embraced community service/service learning by students for several decades now, many other countries also have long histories of attention to social responsibility. Hoyt provides a concise explanation of the current state of service learning in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, Asia Pacific, and the Arab world.

In his piece entitled, “Beyond Service and Service Learning: Educating for Democracy in College,” Rick Battistoni provides a framework for understanding why conventional approaches to community engagement and service learning have fallen short. He advocates for an “intentional” approach to service learning that engages students directly and explicitly in democratic politics through the curriculum. A side outcome to this intentionality, Battistoni suggests, involves solutions to the problems that most community engagement initiatives exhibit.
Blase Scarnati and Romand Coles share the latest initiatives at Northern Arizona University. Seeking to push the model for liberal education to include vocation and engaged democracy, they sketch a theoretical framework that is beginning to impact the culture, practices, and institutional space at their university. They suggest that more faculty are beginning to think of themselves as civic scholars and active agents of change within the broader community, and they sense the dawning of a new, powerful, and diverse movement to reclaim genuinely public forms of education.

Rounding out the volume, Marietjie Oelofsen reviews Peter Levine’s newest book *We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For: The Promise of Civic Renewal in America*. She writes, “Levine’s thoughtfulness about the complexity of issues that theorists of participatory and citizen-centered approaches to democratic governance face is a strength of this book. Levine is mindful of the obstacles encountered by citizens involved in the practice, or work, of civic engagement. The book is a powerful and concrete proposal for moving civic engagement from important, but modest, localized efforts to a forceful, cohesive national movement of civic renewal.”

We hope you’ve found at least one or two articles in this issue that spur you toward experiments of your own. If so, we’d love to hear about them!
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Theodore R. Alter is professor of Agricultural, Environmental, and Regional Economics and codirector of the Center for Economic and Community Development in Penn State’s Department of Agricultural Economics, Sociology, and Education. He is program head for Penn State’s Intercollege Minor in Civic and Community Engagement and Scholar-in-Residence with the Penn State Sustainability Institute. He also serves as Adjunct Research Fellow in the School of Law at the University of New England in Australia. Alter’s research and teaching focus on community and rural development, institutional and behavioral economics, and public scholarship and civic engagement in higher education.

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David Mathews, president of the Kettering Foundation, was secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare in the Ford administration and, before that, president of the University of Alabama. Mathews has written extensively on Southern history, public policy, education, and international problem solving. His books include *Politics for People. Finding a Responsible Public Voice* (University of Illinois Press 1999), *Reclaiming Public Education by Reclaiming Our Democracy* (Kettering Foundation Press 2006), and *The Ecology of Democracy: Finding Ways to Have a Stronger Hand in Shaping Our Future* (Kettering Foundation Press 2014).

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Claire Snyder-Hall writes popular and scholarly texts on issues of concern to democrats and others. She served as research deputy for the Kettering Foundation on the faculty happiness and civic agency project. A former associate professor of political theory, Snyder-Hall holds a PhD from Rutgers University and a BA cum laude from Smith College. She resides in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware.

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The Kettering Foundation is a nonprofit operating foundation, chartered in 1927, that does not make grants but welcomes partnerships with other institutions (or groups of institutions) and individuals who are actively working on problems of communities, governing, politics, and education.

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