



# HIGHER EDUCATION EXCHANGE



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# FOREWORD

by Deborah Witte

This issue of the *Higher Education Exchange* continues its new focus that began in 2010. The journal now seeks to more closely align its theme to the research agenda of the Kettering Foundation. As David Mathews explains in the opening article, the foundation has spent the last year in conversation and research on what was once thought of as our “public schools” work. Through the course of several decades of research, our focus has moved from schools to education to a current consideration of “learning.” While a college of education within the university deals with teacher preparation, Mathews suggests that every college within the institution needs to be concerned with “learning.”

Mathews begins his inquiry with the arresting proposition that “the real school of education is, in fact, the entire institution itself; that is, the university or community college as a whole.” He asks, “What might the implications be of taking this proposition seriously?”

In the articles that follow, several scholars and practitioners respond to Mathews’ question from perspectives within and around the academy. As you will read, engagement, transformation, and relationships figure into each response.

Frank Fear, a long-time pioneer in the work of civic engagement, suggests the need for institutional transformative change, and identifies several barriers he sees to bringing about such a change within a university. Rather than being stymied by these barriers, however, Fear advocates engaging with colleagues through a “soft systems” approach to change—or, as he says, “just doing it.”

O’Meara, in an interview with coeditor David Brown, shares her findings from a study of “engaged faculty.” Like Fear, O’Meara chooses the word “transformation” to describe the way faculty are changing pedagogy, often through research-based projects with students. She identifies several barriers to the work of engagement, including the insularity of faculty and their professional allegiance to their discipline, rather than to their institution or its community. Remedies include the creation of centers and institutes on campuses where connections may be facilitated among faculty who aspire to engage.

Practitioners and scholars Lazarus, Saunders, Tukey, and Fitzgerald introduce engagement from the perspective of students. They suggest that Sustained Dialogue experiences may help students become active, engaged, and effective citizens. They outline seven civic competencies that result when students participate in these dialogues on divisive campus (and community) issues. They argue that interaction—rather than action and reaction—is the essence of how relationships are changed.

In Bernie Ronan’s interview, he shares the perspective of community colleges that are also part of this civic engagement movement. Their roles as “tweeners”—bridging the gap between high school and the four-year colleges—situate them to promote and encourage congruency between civic skills and workplace skills. He provides numerous examples of community colleges that are trying to practice “institutional intentionality” in their engagement work.

In the concluding piece, Sara Drury reviews Martha Nussbaum’s book, *Not For Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*. Like the other scholars and practitioners writing here, Drury explains, Nussbaum is concerned that higher education is failing to serve our democracy. Vocational skills alone, she asserts, cannot prepare the next generation for citizenship. She advocates a renewed attention to education that produces engaged citizens as well as productive workers.