

# HIGHER EDUCATION EXCHANGE



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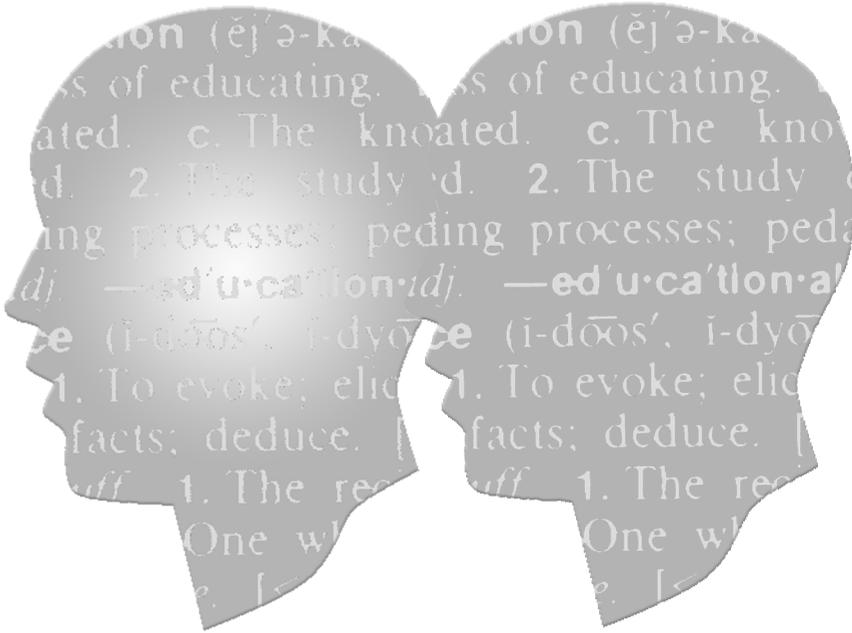
The *Higher Education Exchange* is founded on a thought articulated by Thomas Jefferson in 1820:

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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# *PUBLICLY ENGAGED SCHOLARS: Next-Generation Engagement and the Future of Higher Education*

Edited by Margaret A. Post, Elaine Ward, Nicholas V. Longo,  
and John Saltmarsh

Etana Jacobi, Reviewer

*Publicly Engaged Scholars: Next-Generation Engagement and the Future of Higher Education*, edited by Margaret A. Post, Elaine Ward, Nicholas V. Longo, and John Saltmarsh, is a collection of stories, insights, and questions raised by thirty-three civic-engagement practitioners and scholars that, together, call for the restoration of the public mission of higher education. Building on the work of previous generations of civic-engagement scholars, the authors highlight the efforts of a new generation of scholars. Their work is evidence of a larger shift in the fields of civic engagement and public scholarship, a shift that represents both a movement and a model for institutional change in the 21st century. Maintaining “an authentic respect for the expertise and experience that everyone contributes to education, knowledge generation, and community building” (4) defines the way in which these scholars engage with community and institutional partners.

In Chapter 2, “The Inheritance of Next-Generation Engagement Scholars,” John Saltmarsh and Matthew Hartley orient the contemporary work of the next-generation engaged scholars in the thirty-year history and legacy of the contemporary civic-engagement movement. They note the ways in which the movement’s emergence overlapped with major demographic shifts in the United States, with more people of color, women, and low-income individuals pursuing higher education than ever before. Concurrently, many universities also began incorporating diversity as a core component of their educational missions. Yet despite these shifts, Saltmarsh and Hartley argue, faculty from traditionally underrepresented groups, while slowly growing in numbers, still often struggled to succeed in the university setting because the “institutional epistemology was not hospitable to emerging forms of scholarship (or the scholars who used them) often referred to as *collaborative* or *public scholarship*, that originated in a rich and complex intersection of feminist, postmodern, postcolonial, and critical

race theories, and employed a broad array of disciplinary approaches, schools of thought, and methodological practices” (25).

The rise of this new form of scholarship is directly at odds with two historical and competing regimes of higher education: the “academic capitalist regime,” which purports that “knowledge is constructed as a private good, valued for creating streams of high-technology products that generate profits as they flow through global markets” (28), and the “public-good knowledge/learning regime,” whose goal is “for academics who create knowledge to move it beyond the ivory tower” (28) for the citizenry’s benefit. The authors of this

***Collaborative engagement serves as a model to strengthen pedagogy as well as democracy.***

chapter argue that collaborative or public scholarship that has begun to emerge in recent

years is part of a new “public-engagement knowledge/learning regime” (28). This regime is unique in how it views both the creation as well as the use of knowledge, and thus requires significant and transformative shifts in higher education in order to be actualized. Instead of moving knowledge *beyond* the ivory tower once it is created, as the public-good regime suggests, the public-engagement regime requires that academics “move beyond the ivory tower to *create* knowledge” (29) with the public.

*HEX* readers might find the public-engagement regime familiar, as it is very much aligned with Kettering’s understanding of how institutions operate in a democracy: “In the public-engagement regime, the university is part of an ecosystem of knowledge production addressing public problem-solving, with the purpose of advancing an inclusive, collaborative, and deliberative democracy” (29). Next-generation public-engagement scholars orient their work as a direct challenge to the existing higher education regimes and openly “resist the structures of privilege and inequality that are pervasive in higher education” (xx). They “embody diverse perspectives and experiences” and “collectively want to realize something different in the academy that [they] have inherited” (xxxi).

In Chapter 4, “Collaborative Engagement: The Future of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education,” Nicholas Longo and Cynthia Gibson express concern over the detachment institutions of higher learning are experiencing from both their public missions and the communities they are situated in. Their proposed solution can be found in the understanding and attention these institutions pay to collaborative engagement defined by “its focus on

*community*, the recognition that learners are *cocreators* of knowledge through *democratic education*, and the involvement of a diverse range of participants in *deliberative* conversations to address real-world problems” (62). At the core of this proposal is “an asset-based orientation that values the talents, knowledge, and experiences of all participants in the learning process” (62). Collaborative engagement, sitting at the intersection of community engagement, deliberative dialogue, and democratic engagement, serves as a model to strengthen pedagogy as well as democracy (63).

The diversity of the book’s contributors is indicative of a trend in the field of publicly engaged scholarship. The collection intentionally includes authors from “historically underrepresented populations—especially women, people of color, and low-income individuals” as well as “scholar-practitioners who span boundaries between the academy and the community” (3-4). The successes and challenges that stem from such inclusion are evident throughout the book. It highlights narratives written by publicly engaged scholars navigating difficult pathways in and around traditional academic structures.

In Chapter 6, “Legitimacy, Agency, and Inequality: Organizational Practices for Full Participation of Community-Engaged Faculty,” KerryAnn O’Meara uses vignettes to demonstrate how the elevation of traditional kinds of scholarship over community research hinders the development, agency, and recognition of publicly engaged scholars. Throughout the chapter, O’Meara tracks the careers of two different scholars at the same land-grant university who have had vastly different experiences as a result of how the institution views and values their research. These stories demonstrate that, while both scholars are respected in their fields and are passionate about their work, opportunities for mentorship, funding, public recognition, job security, and advancement are drastically limited by the direction of their scholarship. One scholar’s engaged research was seen merely as “service” and acted as a barrier to his advancement throughout his career because their institution “[had] delineated clearly what counts as legitimate scholarship and legitimate reviews” and what did not (101). Despite the high quality of his work and the tangible impact it had in the communities he worked with, his engaged scholarship was consistently devalued by the academic system he was operating in. Contrastingly, his colleague, by the nature of her research interests and how those interests aligned with the priorities of their institution, had little difficulty advancing up the academic ladder and earning tenure, public recognition, support, and funding for her work. In both instances, the faculty members pursued the research that they were most passionate about in the ways that they were trained, but the engaged

scholar experienced “constrain[ed] faculty agency in pursuit of community engagement” (103).

Throughout Chapter 6, and in the narratives that make up the bulk of the last two sections of the book, the reader is consistently presented with evidence that publicly engaged scholars are doing something that is both meaningful yet not adequately supported by existing higher education structures. This dichotomy is often demonstrated in the scholars’ commitment to, and the demonstrable success of, their public-engagement work and the institutional barriers they face

in pursuit of it.

***Publicly engaged scholars are doing something that is both meaningful yet not adequately supported by existing higher education structures.***

Jessica Jones, a doctoral student at Colorado University Boulder, describes herself as “an outsider working from within” (143) at the start of

Chapter 9, “Paving New Professional Pathways for Community-Engaged Scholarship.” Throughout her time in and around higher education, Jones has sought work with the public, building sustainable community relationships in a variety of capacities. She has, however, faced a series of structural roadblocks that have not only made her work more difficult, but have also devalued her contributions “unless [they] receive an external award or [other recognition] that is immediately quantifiable” (144). Barbara Harrison, a research associate and practitioner-scholar, has also struggled to find her place in academia. She has been forced to navigate an unconventional path in higher education in order to do the community-engagement work she feels passionate about. Despite the financial and job security tradeoffs of such a choice, Harrison believes “by deliberately choosing an alternative role within higher education, there is potential that [she] might create pathways for other people choosing such roles” (146). Patrick Green, director of Loyola University of Chicago’s Center for Experience Learning, is similarly navigating his own nontenure-track path at his university, but is fortunately in “a dynamic position that honors the multiple identities of a public scholar and supports such a hybrid professional role.” Even in the supportive institutional home Green has found at Loyola, performance metrics still do not exist for him and others like him who work in hybrid roles, leaving them at the fringes of the academy.

In Chapter 15, “Building an Organizational Structure That Fosters Blended Engagement,” Byron White, vice president of university engagement

at Cleveland State University, shares a different story. CSU was established fifty years ago as a state-assisted university, with the primary objective of providing higher education to residents of greater Cleveland and northeast Ohio, and has largely maintained an open-admissions policy in order to do that. Unfortunately, while such a policy has expanded access to many individuals who would not otherwise have been able to pursue a degree, it has also historically been seen as at odds with CSU establishing a distinct and rigorous academic reputation in the greater higher education world. White details a recent shift that has occurred in the administration of the school as it reorients its “organizational infrastructure to achieve the dual mission of ensuring that students achieve lifelong success while building civic partnerships that address the region’s most pressing cultural and economic challenges” (233). White finds himself exploring “what a next-generation university can be: namely, an urban university that ties its very survival to the ability to effectively engage its city and region” (233). His position combines the oversight of three traditionally unconnected areas in higher education: workplace engagement, inclusion and multicultural engagement, and civic engagement. The intentionality of this grouping provides a collaborative environment with “the opportunity to deal with these tensions within a shared ecosystem rather than as independent campus functions working in isolation” (234). White suggests that while organizational and administrative reform might not be appealing for many on the frontlines of the public-engagement movement, it is imperative that they spend more time examining how organizations can and should be structured.

In the Afterword, Peter Levine, associate dean for research at Tufts University and Kettering Foundation board director, orients his recommendations for this 21st century civic-engagement movement with a personal narrative. Recounting how formative debates and conversations were throughout his undergraduate experience, and weaving theorists and practical applications of their discussions into his introduction, Levine makes the argument that the experiences of publicly engaged scholars have outrun their theories. Calling on his colleagues, he argues, “we will be unable to address profound social problems until we strengthen our theoretical understanding of society, and that will come from books, data, and seminar rooms as well as from action in communities” (249). Levine then asserts that there are two categories of problems: problems with discourse and problems with collective action. The first set of problems relates to our difficulty with fostering productive discourse, and he identifies ideology, implicit bias, motivated reasoning, and polarization as the key culprits. Under collective-action problems, Levine lists principal-agent

conflicts, free riders, path dependence, Arrow's impossibility theorem, and boundary problems as the main barriers to accomplishing things collectively, even if people agree on goals and values.

Levine's suggestions serve as a call to action for this next generation of scholars to develop new and profound theoretical insights: "We need theories not only about civic engagement but also about how society works and what causes it to change for the better" (256). Noting that these problems are inextricably linked and fundamental to the movement's "unfinished intellectual agenda" (250), Levine gives the next generation of scholars much to wrestle with as they continue to develop their movement and a model for institutional higher education change in the 21st century.



# CONTRIBUTORS

DAVID W. BROWN is coeditor of the *Higher Education Exchange* and coedited two recent Kettering publications: *Agent of Democracy* and *A Different Kind of Politics*. He taught at Yale's School of Management and the New School's Milano Graduate School. Brown is the author of *Organization Smarts* (Amacom 2002), *The Real Change-Makers: Why Government is Not the Problem or the Solution* (Praeger 2011), and *America's Culture of Professionalism: Past, Present, and Prospects* (Palgrave Macmillan 2014). Brown has a forthcoming book, *Assumptions of the Tea Party Movement: A World of Their Own* (Palgrave Macmillan 2016).

LEONARD CASSUTO is the author or editor of eight books on American literature and culture, most recently *The Graduate School Mess: What Caused It and How We Can Fix It* (Harvard University Press, 2015), which was inspired by the monthly column "The Graduate Adviser," which he writes for the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Other recent books include *The Cambridge History of the American Novel* (General Editor, 2011) and *The Cambridge Companion to Baseball* (2011), winner of the Best Anthology Award from the North American Society of Sports Historians. His book *Hard-Boiled Sentimentality: The Secret History of American Crime Stories* was nominated for an Edgar Award and named one of the Ten Best Books of 2008 in the crime and mystery category by the *Los Angeles Times*. Cassuto is also an award-winning journalist who writes on subjects ranging from science to sports. His website is [www.lcassuto.com](http://www.lcassuto.com).

TELMA GIMENEZ, an associate professor at the State University of Londrina, is an applied linguist interested in citizenship education and democracy. She holds a PhD from Lancaster University (England) and was an International Fellow at the Kettering Foundation in 1997.

ETANA JACOBI is a program associate at the Kettering Foundation and an associate at the National Issues Forums Institute. She also serves on the boards of the Center for Civic Engagement and the Kalikow School of Government, Public Policy, and International Affairs at Hofstra University. Jacobi graduated Phi Beta Kappa and summa cum laude from Hofstra University with a BA in political science and global studies.

DENIS MAKAROV is the executive director of the Foundation for the Development of Civic Culture, an NGO that promotes civic and democratic values in post-totalitarian environments. From the collapse of the Soviet Union until 2012, Denis also worked for the Secondary and Higher Education Systems in Russia and abroad. He is an associate professor of political science, Fulbright recipient, and an expert in the fields of civic education, Russian politics, and various community development programs that encourage public participation in governance.

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*, *Reclaiming Public Education by Reclaiming Our Democracy*, and *The Ecology of Democracy: Finding Ways to Have a Stronger Hand in Shaping Our Future*.

DEBORAH WITTE is a senior associate with the Kettering Foundation. She has been coeditor of the *Higher Education Exchange* since its inception in 1991.

# *Kettering Foundation*

200 Commons Road, Dayton, Ohio 45459 (937) 434-7300; (800) 221-3657  
444 North Capitol Street, NW, Suite 434, Washington, D.C. 20001 (202) 393-4478  
[www.kettering.org](http://www.kettering.org)

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