

HIGHER EDUCATION EXCHANGE



Leadership and Democracy

Articles

Maura Casey

Michaela Grenier

Matthew R. Johnson

William V. Muse and Carol Farquhar Nugent

Mark Wilson

Interviews

Dennis Donovan and Harry C. Boyte

Katrina S. Rogers and Keith Melville

Afterword

David Mathews

Editors: Derek W. M. Barker and Alex Lovit
Managing Editor: Joey Easton
Proofreader: Ellen Dawson-Witt
Formatting: Long's Graphic Design, Inc.

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.

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. The interpretations and conclusions contained in the *Higher Education Exchange*, unless expressly stated to the contrary, represent the views of the author or authors and not necessarily those of the foundation, its trustees, or officers.

Copyright © 2019 by the Kettering Foundation
ISSN 2469-6293 (print)
ISSN 2471-2280 (online)

HIGHER EDUCATION EXCHANGE



2019

CONTENTS

Derek W. M. Barker and Alex Lovit	Leadership Education and the Public Mission of Higher Education (Foreword)	1
Maura Casey	Ralph Nader's Call to Citizenship	5
Matthew R. Johnson	The Role of Student Affairs in Fostering Democratic Engagement	15
Dennis Donovan and Harry C. Boyte	Developing Leaders: The Life and Work of a Citizen-Educator Using Public Achievement (An Interview)	26
Mark Wilson	Living Democracy: Lessons for Leadership Education	34
William V. Muse and Carol Farquhar Nugent	The Power of Public Deliberation: Civic Education for Older Students	44
Michaela Grenier	Building Student Civic Leadership through Sustained Dialogue	50
Katrina S. Rogers and Keith Melville	College and University Presidents Serving Democracy (An Interview)	59
David Mathews	What Kind of Democracy Does Higher Education Support? (Afterword)	68
	Contributors	79

Foreword

LEADERSHIP EDUCATION AND THE PUBLIC MISSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Derek W. M. Barker and Alex Lovit

This year, Kettering’s publications are focusing on the relationship between the public and the government, a fundamental component of any healthy democracy. Ideally, the public and the government would work *with* one another, each performing the tasks for which it is best suited. However, in a climate of intense partisanship and polarization, citizens distrust experts and elected officials alike. Public confidence in government appears to be suffering a long-term decline, coinciding with increased polarization in our public discourse and gridlock in Washington. Public distrust is not a phenomenon limited to government; public confidence has declined across a range of business, media, and professional institutions.

If higher education is to have a democratic mission, it must somehow address this crisis of institutional legitimacy—for government, professions, and for itself. Colleges and universities have long positioned themselves as incubators for future leaders. If higher education is to somehow serve democracy beyond the production of academic knowledge, the education of the next generation of civic leaders likely holds the key. As the well-known manager Peter Drucker has argued, we live in a “knowledge society” in which specialized skills are increasingly in demand across the public and private sectors.¹ Higher education plays an important role in determining how a variety of institutions and professions understand the roles, responsibilities, and practices of effective leadership. This leadership education function could be the key to colleges and universities reclaiming their identities as institutions with public purposes.

Moreover, this leadership education role is one of the few remaining public functions of higher education. Higher education seems to be experiencing a declining sense of its public purposes, due largely to pressures to emphasize career preparation and economic benefits but also in part to the political climate of heightened disagreement and polarization. Lacking agreement on the common good in general, it is no surprise that the public appears unable to agree on the public purposes of higher education. This phenomenon of declining

public confidence in institutions is a crisis for colleges and universities. Higher education institutions, like the professional institutions that tend to hire their graduates, are increasingly seen in cynical terms as self-interested and lacking in public purpose. However, no one can deny that higher education plays a critical role in shaping (or *not* shaping) the civic skills and habits of the next generation of professionals. If higher education could somehow, in a visible way, demonstrate that these future professionals understand themselves as *public* leaders, perhaps it could enhance its own standing while simultaneously serving our democracy.

Fortunately, higher education institutions often speak of leadership as a core goal of higher education, and many even have specific leadership schools and programs. How it understands leadership, however, is less clear. Does leadership in higher education mean the education of a narrow elite, the so-called best and the brightest? Or might it mean a distributed model of “leaderfulness,” the capacities of numerous citizens to inspire one another?² Does higher education affirm common conceptions of mobilization politics, organizing like-minded groups to action against their enemies? Or might it mean motivating disparate groups to work together, despite and across their differences? Different understandings of leadership could produce different, even contradictory, outcomes.

Influenced in part by the service-learning movement, many approaches to leadership are premised on the usual notion of impartial experts who serve the common good. However, in a climate of division in which experts are distrusted and the common good is in question, such approaches could simply reproduce the current dynamic. What kind of leaders are needed to not only serve the common good but help bridge divides and recreate a sense of citizens’ common interests? This issue of *HEX* brings together research on different approaches to leadership education that go beyond the conventional service-learning model. What other democratic skills and capacities are being taught? What are their implications for the future of our democracy?

Ralph Nader is, of course, famous for his political organizing and consumer protection advocacy, but his work on college campuses has been among his most lasting impacts. Recognizing the importance of educating young people as civic leaders, Nader founded the Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) national network to organize students for effective political advocacy. Drawing on an in-depth interview, Maura Casey tells the story of the PIRG network, highlighting Nader’s convictions that young citizens are capable of becoming active civic leaders and educational institutions should seek to connect the skills they teach to issues of public concern.

As mentioned above, if young people are critical to the future of our democracy, then so, too, is how higher education institutions define and teach leadership. This task has historically been of central concern to Student Affairs, with its role of educating the “whole person,” beyond just academics. However, as Matthew Johnson argues, contemporary efforts have produced mixed results, first, by neglecting group and societal leadership skills at the expense of individual actions, and second, by neglecting to engage students in conversations about and across differences.

Higher education is beginning to take steps to address those neglected areas. Leadership for collective action is at the heart of Public Achievement, a youth civic engagement initiative in which groups of K-12 students, coached by college students, engage in public work projects they have chosen. Cofounder Dennis Donovan describes Public Achievement as a form of leadership education in an interview with fellow cofounder Harry Boyte.

Similarly, Mark Wilson reflects on Auburn University’s Living Democracy experiment in which students simultaneously reside in communities and participate in their civic lives. Wilson’s article includes reflections of recent graduates of the Living Democracy program on the leadership education they received, along with an excerpt from a previous study focusing on their interactions with local government.

Public deliberation teaches the skills of understanding public issues, listening to diverse perspectives, and expressing one’s own views—crucial leadership competencies in a time of heightened divisions. William Muse and Carol Farquhar Nugent discuss their recent efforts to offer courses in public deliberation to a nontraditional college audience: retirement-aged students. Public deliberation represents not only an alternative to adversarial politics but also an opportunity for these citizens to renew their roles as community civic leaders.

Dialogue offers complementary experiences for emerging civic leaders, especially in circumstances of cultural conflict and misunderstanding. Michaela Grenier describes the use of a process called Sustained Dialogue in leadership education. Based upon a model originally intended for relationship building in international conflicts, these ideas were subsequently adapted for use in campus conflicts, with strong results reported in helping students in negotiating public concerns with other citizens.

In an interview with Keith Melville, Katrina Rogers discusses a recently published book inspired by exchanges held by the Kettering Foundation. Rogers emphasizes the important role that American colleges and universities play in supporting democracy and in educating students for citizenship. Most of the

contributors to that volume are, like Rogers, college presidents or in some other position of leadership in higher education and seek to use their influence to promote the next generation of civic leaders.

Finally, the Afterword by David Mathews asks whether teaching the leadership skills discussed in this volume of *HEX* might contribute to a stronger democracy in which government works *with* an active citizenry, as opposed to educating students as voters or consumers of services provided by institutions. Such a democracy runs counter to familiar models of politics, underscoring the importance of approaches to leadership education that are as nuanced as they are transformative. Higher education could play a valuable role in our democracy with innovation in this area, and, in so doing, make the best case for themselves as institutions with a public mission.



NOTES

- ¹ Peter F. Drucker, “The Age of Social Transformation,” *Atlantic Monthly* 274, no. 5 (November 1994): 53-80.
- ² David Mathews, *Leaders or Leaderfulness? Lessons from High-Achieving Communities* (Dayton, OH: Kettering Foundation Press, 2016).

REFERENCES

- Drucker, Peter F. “The Age of Social Transformation.” *Atlantic Monthly* 274, no. 5 (November 1994): 53-80.
- Mathews, David. *Leaders or Leaderfulness? Lessons from High-Achieving Communities*. Dayton, OH: Kettering Foundation Press, 2016.

CONTRIBUTORS

DEREK W. M. BARKER is a program officer at the Kettering Foundation. With a background in political theory, he works primarily on research concerning the democratic role of higher education institutions, philanthropy and nonprofit organizations, journalism, and the professions. Barker is the coeditor of Kettering's *Higher Education Exchange* and has contributed to other Kettering publications, including the *Kettering Review* and *Connections*. He is the author of *Tragedy and Citizenship: Conflict, Reconciliation, and Democracy from Haemon to Habel* (SUNY Press, 2009) and articles appearing in the academic journals *Political Theory*, *New Political Science*, and *The Good Society*.

HARRY C. BOYTE is a public intellectual and organizer. He founded Public Achievement and cofounded with Marie Ström the Public Work Academy. He holds the title of Senior Scholar in Public Work Philosophy at Augsburg University. Boyte is the author of 11 books, including *Awakening Democracy through Public Work* (Vanderbilt University Press, 2018). His articles have appeared in more than 150 publications, including the *New York Times*, *Political Theory*, and the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. In the 1960s, Boyte was a field secretary for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Martin Luther King's organization, and subsequently did community organizing among low-income white residents in Durham, North Carolina.

MAURA CASEY is a senior associate with the Kettering Foundation. Her 35-year journalism career encompasses work as an editor and opinion writer for four newspapers, including the *Hartford Courant* and the *New York Times*. She has won 45 national and regional awards for journalism, including a shared Pulitzer Prize for reporting. She owns a Connecticut communications firm, CaseyInk, LLC. Casey holds a BA in political science from Buffalo State College and an MA in journalism and public affairs from American University. In her spare time, Casey sails her boat on Long Island Sound and helps her husband of 36 years, Peter J. Panzarella, harvest and sell the vegetables he grows on their farm.

DENNIS DONOVAN is the national organizer of Public Achievement at the Sabo Center for Democracy and Citizenship at Augsburg University in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Along with Harry Boyte, Donovan was a key architect of Public Achievement, which is a theory-based practice of citizens organizing to do public work to improve the common good. Since 1997, Donovan has worked with K-12 schools, colleges, universities, and community groups as a speaker, trainer, consultant, and educator. Before joining the center, Donovan worked in K-12 education for 24 years as a teacher and school principal. He was a founder and education chair of the St. Paul Ecumenical Alliance of Congregations, which grew into a statewide organization known as ISAIAH. Donovan received the 2008 University of Minnesota Community Service Award.

CAROL FARQUHAR NUGENT is vice president of the National Issues Forums Institute (NIFI) and a senior associate with the Kettering Foundation, where she was a program officer for many years. Farquhar Nugent served for 12 years as the executive director of Grantmakers in Aging (GIA), a national membership organization of philanthropies that address issues of aging. In her work with NIFI, she led the development of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute program at the University of Dayton.

MICHAELA GRENIER is a program director for the Sustained Dialogue Campus Network (SDCN), where she spends much of her time helping campuses build capacity for dialogue and collaborative problem solving. Grenier supports campuses in building and sustaining dialogue initiatives by working with campus teams to apply the Sustained Dialogue model to retreat-based, course-based, and extracurricular settings. Before joining SDCN, Grenier served in other roles within the fields of higher education and conflict resolution, including supporting student

retention on a college campus, designing student civic leadership programming, and working in conflict resolution programs for teenagers.

MATTHEW R. JOHNSON is an associate professor in the department of educational leadership at Central Michigan University. An associate editor for the *Journal of College and Character*, he also sits on the editorial boards for *Oracle: The Research Journal of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors* and the *Journal of College Student Development*. He received the Sigma Alpha Pi teaching award in 2015. Johnson holds a PhD from the University of Maryland and an MS from Miami University of Ohio. His research focuses on the intersections of leadership, civic engagement, and social justice, as well as how college experiences help students learn and develop into civically engaged citizens who work effectively across differences.

ALEX LOVIT is a program officer at the Kettering Foundation. With an academic background in the study of history, he assists with Kettering's experiments in deliberating about historical issues through Historic Decisions issue guides. He also works for Kettering's research with both K-12 and higher education and provides historical research for the foundation. Lovit is the coeditor (with Derek W. M. Barker) of Kettering's *Higher Education Exchange*.

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*.

KEITH MELVILLE is a senior associate with the Kettering Foundation and a member of the National Issues Forums (NIF) advisory group. He served as the first executive editor and author of 18 NIF issue guides and has written numerous reports for the Kettering Foundation, including *Beyond the Clash: How a Deliberative Public Talks about Immigration* (2019). Previously, Melville was senior vice president of Public Agenda and a White House staff writer. His experience in applied social research encompassed conceptual work for Sesame Street and studies of the impact of school desegregation strategies. He is the author of four books, including *A Passion for Adult Learning* (Fielding University Press, 2016). A professor at the Fielding Graduate University, Melville completed his doctoral studies at Columbia University.

WILLIAM V. MUSE is president of the National Issues Forums Institute and a senior associate with the Kettering Foundation. During his tenure at NIFI, he helped to establish the Taylor Willingham Legacy Fund, the NIFI Ambassadors program, the Moderators Circle, and an Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) program of courses for senior citizens that NIFI hopes to develop at universities around the country. He holds a PhD in management from the University of Arkansas. Muse worked in higher education for 40 years, including 20 years as president or chancellor of the University of Akron, Auburn University, and East Carolina University.

RALPH NADER is one of America's most effective social critics. His analyses and advocacy have enhanced public awareness and increased government and corporate accountability. His book *Unsafe at Any Speed* led to the passage of a series of automobile safety laws. Nader founded or inspired a wide variety of organizations, including the Princeton Alumni Corps and the Applesseed Foundation, a nonprofit network of 17 public-interest justice centers. An author, lecturer, attorney, and political activist, Nader's life-long work and advocacy has led to safer cars, healthier food, safer drugs, cleaner air and drinking water, and safer work environments. In 2006, the *Atlantic* named him one of the hundred most influential figures in American history. Nader continues his work to advance meaningful civic institutions and citizen participation.

KATRINA S. ROGERS is president of Fielding Graduate University. In the course of her career, she has served international nongovernmental and educational sectors in many roles, including leadership of the European campus for the Thunderbird School of Global Management in Geneva, Switzerland. Rogers holds doctorates in political science and history. In addition to many articles and books focused on organizational leadership in sustainability, Rogers serves on the boards of Prescott College, the Toda Institute for Global Policy and Peace Research and the Public Dialogue Consortium. She received a presidential postdoctoral fellowship from the Humboldt Foundation and was a Fulbright scholar to Germany, where she taught environmental politics and history.

MARK WILSON is the director of Community Engagement and the Caroline Marshall Draughon Center for the Arts and Humanities at Auburn University. He is the coauthor of *Living Democracy: Communities as Classrooms, Students as Citizens* (Kettering Foundation Press, 2017) and author of *William Owen Carver's Controversies in the Baptist South* (Mercer University Press, 2010). Wilson is an Appalachian Teaching Fellow with the Appalachian Regional Commission, secretary of the Alabama Historical Association, and a former member of the board of directors for the National Issues Forums Institute. Wilson has coordinated contracts and grants with the National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, Appalachian Regional Commission, Kettering Foundation, David Mathews Center for Civic Life, and the Alabama Humanities Foundation. He holds degrees from the University of Mobile, McAfee School of Theology at Mercer University, and Auburn University.

Kettering Foundation

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