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# HIGHER EDUCATION EXCHANGE



2001

Editors

David W. Brown,

Deborah Witte

Copy Editor

Betty Frecker

Art Director/Production

George Cavanaugh

Cover Design, Illustrations and Formatting

Hull Design Group

Circulation Coordinator

Rita Shanesy

Publisher

Edward J. Arnone

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# CONTENTS

Deborah Witte	Foreword	1
John R. Wheat	University Partnerships with Rural Alabama: An Interview with John R. Wheat	4
Nancy L. Thomas	Cultivating Successors: Guidance from the Field	13
Scott Peters	The Civic Mission Question in Land Grant Education	25
William C. Hubbard	On the Role of Trustees: An Interview with William C. Hubbard	38
Peter Levine	Public Intellectuals and the Influence of Economics	43
William B. Lacy	Democratizing Science in an Era of Expert and Private Knowledge	52
Pamela Whitelock and Lynn Gager	The Community's Space: A Story of Gulf Coast Community College	61
David Mathews	Afterword	67

# FOREWORD

By Deborah Witte

As coeditor of this journal, I receive mail from many organizations and individuals who are part of the higher education field. I read higher education journals and publications, I scan conference proceedings and surf the Net, trying to keep up with what's happening in higher education. Friends and colleagues send me articles and notes, clippings from every imaginable source. These notes announce conferences, workshops, and Web sites. They solicit my attendance at seminars, or submission of papers or visits to Web sites. I try to read it all. Every once in a while a real gem appears in the gargantuan pile of material.

Such a gem, written by Father Theodore Hesburgh, former president of the University of Notre Dame, appeared on the back page of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* this past February. In the article, Father Hesburgh cites quite a few recent reports and studies that, to his mind, document the changes in the culture of higher education and the way presidents “view their roles as spokespersons on important public issues.” He laments a recent American Council on Education report that finds most Americans “believe institutional needs rather than those of . . . the wider community drive [the] comments” of presidents. He suggests “the true antidote to the public’s view that colleges are simply ivory towers of intellectual dilettantism is engagement with important public issues — however difficult and thorny these issues may be.” He urges the nation’s college and university presidents — and I believe the same can be said of all those whose work is situated within “the ivory tower” — to be the catalysts for a conversation about the pressing issues of the day.

The authors in this issue of the *Higher Education Exchange* share Father Hesburgh’s belief that scholars in every discipline and colleges and universities of every stripe can lead the way. Indeed, it is this belief that started John Wheat, professor of community and rural medicine at The University of Alabama, on his professional journey.

David Brown, coeditor of this journal, interviews Wheat

about his success in engaging with the community. Instrumental in creating the Rural Alabama Health Alliance, Wheat put in place “continual reciprocal dialogues between communities and universities.” He has been able to stem the deterioration of the health of rural Alabamians through this university-community partnership.

The following article by Nancy Thomas presents the dilemma of “successor generations.” Through a dialogue that brought together more than 200 teachers, firefighters, neighborhood activists, rabbis and ministers, nurses and politicians, participants discovered a shared concern that current college and high school students are not being schooled in the helping professions. The participants perceived the universities as doing little to cultivate their successors. Thomas outlines the recommendations of the group and suggests it serve as a text to inform student learning experiences both in and out of the classroom, in faculty outreach scholarship, and in new community-university partnerships.

Engaged scholarship is also the theme of the next article by Scott Peters of Cornell University. Tackling the civic mission question through the example of the land grant colleges, Peters asks the reader to consider what the mission of the university should be and how, through what kinds of work, it should be pursued. He offers three possible approaches to the questions, while acknowledging the “task of civic renewal in land grant education is something of a long shot,” and encourages a prophetic stance.

An understanding of professionalism and scholarship, and even the meaning of knowledge, can lead to tension between a faculty member’s fealty to his discipline and competing fealty to his students and the larger community. The next three articles address this problem from the view of specific disciplines or, as in the case of William Hubbard, the view of a university trustee.

In an interview with David Brown, William Hubbard shares his experiences as a trustee helping to connect his institution to public life. Coming to his role as the embodiment of public service, Hubbard believes that “responsibility to one’s discipline is concurrent with an obligation to the institution.” He offers a suggestion on how his university — and others — might alter the alignment of faculty. He bemoans the academy’s withdrawal from public life and encourages trustees to better articulate the importance of higher education to their communities.

Peter Levine, of the University of Maryland’s Institute for

Public Policy, insists, in the next article, that there is a role for most scholars in community-building. He acknowledges the fine line between a scholar's professional or expert identity and his identity as a citizen. He cautions against the arrogance of scholarship however, and using the economist as an example, he identifies legitimate ways a scholar might engage in community problem solving.

William Lacy's article follows outlining a framework and examples of new ways that universities might engage with the public, especially in scientific matters. He argues for a role for public knowledge, created from the inclusion of citizens in scientific decisions and presents successful examples from around the world. The democratization of science should be aggressively pursued, he challenges, "thereby ensuring that the agendas of science and technology are compatible with a sustainable democracy and serve the goals, values, and needs of communities."

The article by Whitelock and Gager brings us back full circle to Father Hesburgh's challenges. Their story of Gulf Coast Community College showcases the practice of one institution that acts as a convenor for its community's decision-making process. Gulf Coast is trying, with all their resources, to be the kind of college Father Hesburgh champions in his article — a college in partnership with its community.

Finally, David Mathews, in his "Afterword," offers other themes he finds evident in this collection of articles and previews what's to come in subsequent issues of this journal. Among them is a discussion of the understanding of democracy implied in the various options for revitalizing the civic identity of higher education. David Brown and I welcome the addition of your voice to our next conversation.

# UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS WITH RURAL ALABAMA:

## An Interview with John R. Wheat

*David Brown, coeditor of Higher Education Exchange, sought out Dr. John Wheat, a professor in the Department of Community and Rural Medicine at The University of Alabama, to learn more about his personal story and how it influenced his work and a university's role in public life.*

**Brown:** John, I would very much like to know more about what brought you to where you are now.

**Wheat:** I was born to a family of rural background and humble means in 1951. Both parents had completed 12 grades of school. I was the fourth of seven children. Dad tried his hand at full-time farming the year that I was born, but soon gave that up to return to the industrial skills that he had learned in the Navy in WW II. Mother, a very intelligent and widely read woman, raised children. We moved from rural Tuscaloosa County, Alabama, to rural Beach Island, South Carolina, then to rural York, Alabama, by the time I started first grade. That's when Dad found lasting work in the paper mill industry, though he always maintained a small acreage on which I seemed to excel beyond my sibs in garden work and raising calves, pigs, and chickens.

My sixth grade teacher, Mrs. Ludie Williams, conspired with my somewhat fundamentalist religious upbringing to suggest to me and my parents "that to whom much is given, much is expected." Shortly thereafter, my calling came through quite clearly to become a doctor. In the early 1960s, Alabama was experiencing a major rural health care crisis. The School of Medicine at Birmingham, present since 1945, was making great strides in scientific and specialty medicine, but the physicians produced were not choosing rural practice. My extended family, a very prolific clan that could boast of one distant cousin who had completed college at (then) Livingston Teachers College (now University of West Alabama), had spread over several counties of rural west-central Alabama. This close-knit, but mobile, group led me to understand the down-to-earth reality of the demand for doctors in

the country, a demand that by 1970 had translated into a state government commitment to establish new medical school campuses in three regions of the state. I felt the urging to do something special for “my people,” and the role models available to me were either preacher or doctor. I pondered these issues and at age 13 perceived the calling, which as I look back, must have been inspired in part by a very wise mother and teachers.

As a premedical student at The University of Alabama, I was introduced to public health in a course in Medical Sociology. At the same time, the local newscasts were discussing almost daily adverse health consequences of the dense industrial smog caused by the iron foundries in Birmingham. Dr. George Hardy, a young, striking M.D.-M.P.H. who was the Birmingham-area public health officer, was frequently on the television, once with Governor George Wallace, discussing measures needed to protect the people in his area. A public health nurse, who was visiting lecturer to our Medical Sociology class, noted that rural Alabama needed M.D.-M.P.H. physicians like Dr. Hardy to oversee protection of the health of large multicounty areas of Alabama as well as to see patients. That appealed to me. I could see myself being relevant to the health concerns of my family scattered over several counties of Alabama. Thus, I entered medical school at Birmingham with that intention. But I was not alone. Patricia Hallman, my high school sweetheart and daughter of a cotton and cattle farmer, decided to forsake her family tradition of sending children to Auburn, Alabama’s land grant university with an agricultural college, and follow me to Tuscaloosa. We married in our junior year at The University of Alabama.

**Brown:** And after you graduated...?

**Wheat:** I took an internship in the Navy in San Diego, which completed my journey from rural Alabama to large, frightening Tuscaloosa (about 50,000 then) and The University of Alabama, then to even more scary Birmingham with large freeways and buildings you could get lost in, and finally to San Diego with strange dialects and culture.

The Navy provided us opportunity to see even more by assigning me for two years to a small naval base on the Northwest Cape of Australia where the Navy kept watch over the southern Indian Ocean for hostile submarine traffic. Patricia and newborn David accompanied me. It was an isolated rural lifestyle, 800 miles north of Perth. As medical officer, I was responsible for the health

of sailors, spouses, and children, and civilians, plus the food, water, sanitation, and environmental health of the base. I learned the importance of maintaining a strong preventive focus, quick diagnosis of critical illnesses, and primary care for noncritical conditions. Also, I saw that the public health role in terms of food, sanitation, and community health were major factors in the morale of the entire base population. It was also interesting to see the wholesomeness that existed among sailors and their families from several races and religions, often even within interracial relationships, including marriage and children. It resonated strongly with memories of classmates in medical school who were different from me in color, but also smarter and more sophisticated.

It was after completing formal education, including stints at the University of North Carolina and Mayo Clinic, that I really learned about community medicine. I took an assistant professor position in the Department of Preventive Medicine and Internal Medicine at the University of Tennessee College of Medicine in Memphis, Tennessee. I also became more involved as a community member in Olive Branch, Mississippi, the rural suburb where Patricia and I decided to begin to raise our family. There was one particularly formative experience in my understanding of community health — my relationship with Reverend Herman Powell, an African-American pastor of the inner-city Early Grove Baptist Church in Memphis.

As a preventive medicine faculty member, I was eager to assist a very aggressive Caucasian community health worker who intended to start a hypertension prevention campaign among the black community in the heart of Memphis. But first, I required of her that she identify a leader in the community who would work with us. She identified Reverend Powell by reputation and influence. After several trial runs of setting up meetings at restaurants of his choice, but his failing to show, he finally invited me to his study in the church. He explained that he had to be certain of my interest in following his lead before taking the risk of associating with a young university faculty member whose eye may have been more on creating an attractive curriculum vitae than on service to the underserved community. The false starts at restaurants were tests of my commitment. Later he amplified when we began to plan specific programs, “John, when night comes, or if this project fails and causes a community uprising, you can go home to Olive Branch and sleep in peace. I must stay and suffer the conse-

*My major professional objective was to develop an academic focus for improving the health and quality of life of the underserved people of rural Alabama.*

quences.”

**Brown:** When did you return to Alabama?

**Wheat:** After five years in Olive Branch, the opportunity came open at home at The University of Alabama to join the Community Medicine faculty. My first academic assignment was to teach third-year medical students about rural community medicine. My major professional objective was to develop an academic focus for improving the health and quality of life of the underserved people of rural Alabama.

Some of my earliest activities in 1990 were to explore the views of major constituents of the rural health effort. My departmental chairman and I visited with the state health officer who was looking for partners to help him match the legislature’s interest in solving Alabama’s rural health crisis that had been redeclared in 1989. I also visited rural physicians who were preceptors to our medical students. My father-in-law introduced me to the leadership of the Alabama Farmers Federation, who took interest in my ambitions.

Among all these constituents there existed the impression that Alabama had invested great amounts of resources in The University of Alabama School of Medicine, which had become a beacon of excellence in scientific and subspecialty care medicine and a producer of physicians for cities like Birmingham, Montgomery, Mobile, Huntsville, Dothan, Tuscaloosa, and Montgomery, but not for rural towns like York, Town Creek, Camden, Cedar Bluff, and Elba. Furthermore, these constituents voiced concern that the growth of UAB created an “urban undertow” that siphoned funds intended for rural developments into its academic framework and that attracted rural students away to scientific and specialist careers with little practical relevance for their hometowns.

The rural physician preceptors became a potent voice for motivating my efforts. After talking with about eight of them and hearing the same story again and again, I decided to invite them to a meeting to discuss their common concerns. They came and developed a consensus that something should be done about their need for more young doctors to choose rural practice in rural com-



munities. They needed help and their small community hospitals desperately needed help.

I had learned from Jim Bernstein in North Carolina that multiple voices from within a community are often necessary to effect a change, so I challenged the group to bring their hospital administrators with them to another meeting to see if the consensus remained firm. They responded and the consensus was solid, i.e., Alabama needed more rural physicians produced by its medical schools. As a final challenge, I asked them to another meeting and to bring a community representative whose vocation was outside of the health sector. Attending were the owner of a glove factory, an accountant, a community college vice president, and a farmer. This enlarged group confirmed that rural Alabama needed a change in the way rural physicians were being produced and that rural voice should be present at the point where such medical education decisions were made. I encouraged the group to do something to address their concerns with the pledge to work with them. They formed a rural health working group to consider this proposition.

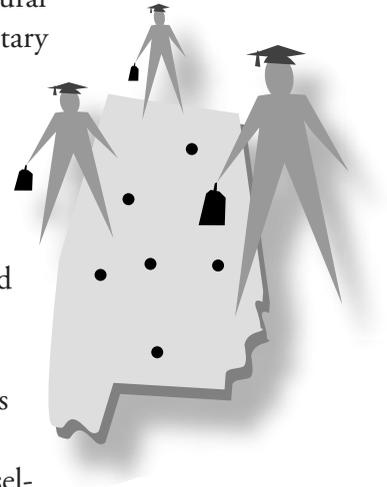
**Brown:** Then what happened?

**Wheat:** The rural health working group explored ways to manage funds that did not require control by external sources. Public schools are heavily dependent on central school authorities. Public health is almost entirely run out of the state health department in Montgomery. The group decided to form a tax-exempt nonprofit organization and to formulate its membership and leadership in such a way that no outside organization could subvert the purposes of the organization through stacking its membership or votes. Three counties circumferential to Tuscaloosa County decided to form the Rural Alabama Health Alliance (RAHA). Each county had a local committee. That local committee would appoint three to five messengers to attend and be members of the RAHA Board of Directors.

The membership and leadership of RAHA became a very effective group, securing grant monies for agrimedecine, telemedicine, and area health education activities. RAHA reviewed the thoughts that I placed forward concerning rural medical education, often requiring me to produce literature to support my claims and subjecting my thoughts to the crucible of “down home” knowledge. Once my thoughts had melded with theirs to produce an actionable thought, RAHA members would advocate

for the completion of that action. They would speak with leadership in their communities, in their professional organizations, and in academe. At times, they would explain the importance of these ideas to local legislators and officials in Montgomery.

The comprehensive strategy that we developed was dubbed the Alabama rural medicine pipeline. Academic wisdom from the School of Medicine held that the best rural doctors would be the brightest academically competitive students that could be admitted to medical school, then enticed into rural communities via missionary zeal or monetary appeal, “missionaries or mercenaries” as some RAHA colleagues called them. The problem was that the School of Medicine’s definition of brightest academically competitive rested on criteria favorable to children who had experienced urban backgrounds and schools such that very few rural students were being admitted to medical school. The urban students did not value rural living so that the very few who did venture into rural Alabama seldom stayed long. RAHA accepted and pushed the idea that rural school children should be selectively identified, encouraged, tutored, and admitted to medical school with an educational track designed to produce highly competent physicians with skills beyond those required of urban practice to meet specific demands of rural practice.



As an outgrowth of this encouragement, I presided over development of the Rural Health Scholars Program to identify and recruit rural high school students into pathways of health professional education and the Rural Medical Scholars Program to admit rural premedical students to a rural medical educational pathway in the School of Medicine.

**Brown:** Where does that program stand now?

**Wheat:** As of 2000, eight years of the Rural Health Scholars Program have produced 226 scholars representing every rural county in Alabama. Several of these students have entered medical school. The first group includes four medical students, three of whom are juniors. There are currently 50 Rural Medical Scholars, representing a majority of the rural counties of Alabama. The first group are now seniors in medical school. The pipeline of rural

medical education is full from the eleventh grade through medical school. The remaining questions include how to improve the pipeline and when to enlarge it. As these students enter residency programs and begin to consider community placement, additional efforts to help establish viable practices in often economically depressed communities will be necessary.

These scholars programs have become a great asset in the College of Community Health Sciences' effort to improve the health of rural communities of Alabama. The scholars and projects that they complete identify us clearly as a partner working with rural Alabama instead of draining them of resources and young people. We now have a credible voice to engage in more formal dialogue with rural communities.

**Brown:** How has all of this influenced your view of a university's role in public life?

**Wheat:** As children, my rural Sumter County, Alabama, peers and I often thought of the university "professors" we sometimes saw as being out of step with reality. In fact, we wondered whether they could survive in the life that we knew. All the evidence that we could gather pointed to the opposite. Their children in our school seemed always destined for trouble. They did not know how to grow vegetables or milk cows and seemed to think it was so exciting to participate in such activities. As I completed my education, the university came to represent a major resource for the state, the leading institution for advancing the population. As a postdoctoral fellow and faculty member at three major health science centers, the university began to look like a self-absorbed, isolated institution, often fighting with public interests to sustain its internal agendas. I never got away from my ambition as a pre-medical student of having a major role in the health of rural west-central Alabama.

When I returned to Alabama, the health service agencies to which the public health nurse lecturer was alluding were no longer available as an organizational podium from which someone like myself could exercise an influence on the health of a rural area. However, the College of Community Health Sciences was similar enough that I could adapt. My masters of Public Health from the University of North Carolina was in Health Policy and Administration, preparing me with theoretical concepts about how to merge constituents' demands with program directions. Prior to the experience with RAHA, I had theory and some expe-

*We should be preparing citizens to be assertive in engaging in leadership at the community level.*

rience, but no proof that the university could partner with a public to advance common causes. Now, I am sure that it is so. And I find that with appropriate care to the structure of the continuing dialogue among myself and rural communities, that I am perceived as a “perffessor” who is relevant to their lives and at least somewhat knowledgeable in their ways.

**Brown:** What do you think are democracy’s claims on the academy and, in particular, on medical schools?

**Wheat:** I have a theory about our situation in Alabama, especially rural Alabama. We are a state of dreamers. I think because we feel so distant from the state’s decision-making process and powerless (as a result of the 1901 constitution), that we dream. If we were closer to the decisions, we would be more practical. We should be preparing citizens to be assertive in engaging in leadership at the community level and make our thought processes more practical. An example would be to match our educational expectations and options for our children to opportunities that will sustain them in some relationship with their communities in the future, as opposed to our dreamily “up and away” motif that sweeps our capable youngsters out of the community and out of the state to roles that support distant societies.

Higher education has a responsibility in this. It appears that the state universities may play into this motif with “Send your best and brightest to us. They can escape local, rural Alabama and come to our elite campuses.” Instead of being places away from home, they should be extensions of home. They could become so through a continual reciprocal dialogue between communities and universities so that each informs the other of needs and what they can do for and with each other. In this formulation, professors have a responsibility to be relevant to the rural community and to evaluate their relevancy by joining in the community-university dialogue.

**Brown:** We both have heard David Mathews talk about the “public-making” rather than the “public-serving” capacity or potential of the academy. From your experience, is that possible?

**Wheat:** Yes, the formation of RAHA was a public-making activity. It was not complete in that with time the physicians in the group exercised such voice that others tended to bow out. But in the early years, voices from many walks of life were sounded and were effective. The multiplicity of opinions and ways of expressing concerns produced a greater appreciation for a com-

mon cause that all could endorse as good for the public than we could know before. Part of this had to do with finding a public place where all could sit down together and talk about issues. But mainly it had to do with all sitting down and talking together; something that we had not been doing before.

**Brown:** How should medical schools prepare their graduates for public life?

**Wheat:** My opinion is that medical education does not have to cloister students away for the eight or so years required to learn the profession. Medical students as a whole are a very gregarious and helpful lot. I believe that a more open learning format that involves students in the kinds of communities that they hope to serve, to learn the people, to share personal and community needs will lead quite naturally to students of medicine becoming involved with the communities in thinking through and proposing solutions to issues of the community and to their own roles within the community. In addition, a special rotation may be helpful for some students to guide them into this public discourse.

**Brown:** What do you think would have to change for higher education to become a serious participant in public life?

**Wheat:** I believe that each faculty member would need to be directed to identify with a specific target community for whose benefit the faculty member was working. Also, that the faculty member's academic rewards would need to rest to a significant degree on the appraisal provided by a representative body of the target group. This group would not be students, but communities from whence the students came. The community is not necessarily geographic, but geographic communities have lots of built-in credibility for designating themselves "community."

**Brown:** Thank you, John. I've learned a great deal.



# CULTIVATING SUCCESSORS: GUIDANCE FROM THE FIELD

By Nancy L. Thomas

By now, most academics have heard the alarms sounding the decline of public life and collective activity in the United States and the dire predictions for the health of American democracy. In his thought-provoking book *Bowling Alone*, political scientist Robert Putnam documents the diminishing inclination of Americans to work and play collectively. Today, insufficient numbers of Americans vote much less volunteer, organize, join, or run for public office. This is in contrast to the image of the successful democratic society described by Alexis de Tocqueville more than 150 years ago. Similarly, sociologists such as the authors of *Habits of the Heart* warned that today's excessively individualistic Americans lack a commitment to common purposes and the greater good. Educator Alexander Astin lamented, "Something is terribly wrong with the state of American democracy."<sup>1</sup>

Commentators on American democracy have successfully created a sense of urgency, and higher education seems to be responding. One such response was an interesting initiative I had the privilege of directing called Listening to Communities,<sup>2</sup> sponsored by the American Council on Education (ACE).<sup>3</sup>

Guiding Listening to Communities was the belief that as higher education explores ways to revitalize its historic public mission and educate for citizenship, it should engage communities in dialogue on how best to achieve those goals.

Beginning in 1999, ACE organized eight pilot forums around the country in partnership with local colleges and universities.<sup>4</sup> Listening to Communities invited a range of community, business, government, philanthropic, religious, and education leaders to share their views on higher education's role in a democracy. *Guides for Participants*, booklets to frame the issues were distributed in advance. Forum participants were asked to consider and discuss how colleges and universities can best fulfill their role as *educators* of American citizens and as *institutional members* of a community. The forums were organized around two simple questions, "What works?" and "What can higher education be doing

better?” While the primary and modest goal of Listening to Communities was to explore formats for convening citizens around higher education’s role in public life, some essential concerns emerged that warrant consideration and further exploration. In this article, I review those central concerns and recommendations made by forum participants on how campuses can respond.

### **The Challenge: Cultivating Successors**

Forum participants reported some positive signs. They noted that many colleges and universities are commendable *institutional members of their communities*. When done well, community-university partnerships — particularly applied- and outreach-scholarship that informs public policy and student community-based service — strengthen and add value to communities. Colleges and universities have “a lot of good initiatives under way,” said one participant, echoing the views of many.

Despite these good initiatives, Listening to Communities participants — more than 200 teachers, firefighters, neighborhood organizers, heads of nonprofit organizations, rabbis and ministers, nurses, nonprofit board members, politicians, and foundation directors — repeatedly expressed concern that higher education is doing too little to cultivate their successors. Too few graduates have the inclination — the sense of calling or passion — or the skills to do their kind of work.

Educating successors is partly a *matter of numbers*. In view of the magnitude of the American society’s needs — what one participant described as “a raging forest fire with too few people fighting it” — higher education is simply not cultivating adequate numbers of graduates committed to public life. The country faces a serious shortage of teachers, superintendents, clergy, nurses, and others, participants pragmatically noted, and too few graduates select service professions as a career choice. Many participants lamented what they described as a show-me-the-money attitude in students, pointing to the high percentage of students pursuing degrees in business and other profitable fields. Colleges and universities appear all too willing to serve students as consumers.



*Colleges and universities, are failing to cultivate students' souls.*

Encouraging graduates toward public professions, however, will not reach a scale sufficient to have an impact, participants added. Educating successors is more poignantly *a matter of conscience*. Higher education's responsibility is to provide students with opportunities to explore and identify what they believe in. Colleges and universities, forum participants worried, are failing to cultivate students' souls. They challenged colleges and universities to integrate, across the curriculum, classroom experiences that cultivate students' values, social consciences, and sense of personal responsibility for public concerns.

Educating successors is also *a matter of skills*, skills linked to more than disciplinary competency. One participant underscored higher education's need to educate toward "an undisciplined-based, complex way of being." He explained:

There is this absolute zone that I do not think has been thought through yet. Where and how is the preparation of people whose job is not [for example] social work in the classic sense as it is the social and economic engagement of people? It is waiting to happen. . . . It is crosscutting and interdisciplinary. It follows the trends of community builders. It makes the connection between human capital strategies and place-based strategies. Currently, the people who train people for jobs [in social work] are not the same people who are doing, for example, affordable housing or welfare reforms. They are in separate camps. One is accused of building a ghetto. The other is accused of only looking out for individuals, [of having] no sense of community. The more advanced educational organizations are trying to break down that barrier. They are trying to do both.

One participant echoed many views when he explained that colleges and universities can educate toward "an undisciplined-based, complex way of being — a *soulful* way of being, *and smart!*" To reach the scale needed to have an impact, colleges and universities need to model and foster a "whole new way of thinking." This new way of thinking involves something less distinct than a career choice or job description, something more than a set of skills. Higher education's role is to provide students with formative experiences that shape not just how they think, but their *way of being*. Regardless of discipline or career choice, every student can be called to responsible citizenship.

*Regardless of discipline or career choice, every student can be called to responsible citizenship.*

## **A Whole New Way of Thinking: Successor Education**

How do colleges and universities cultivate the conscience and skills to generate successors? How does higher education reach a scale sufficient to have an impact? Forum participants offered guidance, specifically ten areas of focus, on how higher education can educate for democracy:

- *Teach the public relevance of every discipline:* Higher education can devise ways for students pursuing any career — even those with demanding credit hours such as engineering — to understand the public relevance of that profession. If engineering students are studying, for example, the physics of a new transit system, they can also learn the social, economic, and political implications of that project. One participant suggested that every student spend at least a semester in a government or nonprofit setting, practicing his/her profession and learning the public role of that discipline.

- *Promote interdisciplinary learning:* Higher education, participants criticized, has become too much of a series of “disconnected, overspecialized fields” to be valuable to society. One participant reasoned, “Real solutions to problems are not specialized. Real solutions are interdisciplinary.” Clustering courses and disciplines — linking economics and political sciences, for example — can provide students with a more complex and deeper exposure to their discipline. Universities can also consider new interdisciplinary majors such as “Family Studies” and can continue to support interdisciplinary studies that have earned respect such as African-American Studies, Women’s Studies, and Environmental Studies.

- *Integrate themes of social justice across the curriculum:* At most institutions, learning about matters of social justice occurs in isolated courses or departments. Rather than isolate themes of social justice, colleges and universities should explore ways to integrate them across the curriculum.

Forum participants expressed particular concern over race relations and underscored the need for higher education to consider diversity as an educational resource or learning tool. All students should graduate with experience and a high level of comfort working in diverse groups. While people of color frequently experience situations where they are the “only” in a room of white people, the reverse is almost never true. Learning experiences can push students, particularly white students, out of their comfort

zones so they can broaden those zones to include consistent collaboration with people from diverse backgrounds. Learning experiences can frequently include teamwork, with teams having been structured by the faculty member to ensure diversity within the group. The success of the group dynamic can be evaluated as part of students' grades.

- *Foster personal ethics and reflective practices:* Colleges and universities can consciously strive to encourage students to lead a reflective life and explore and identify their values. Students can be encouraged to consider, "To what should I devote my life?" "How can I be part of a solution to a problem?" and "About what do I care passionately?" Forum participants suggested that these reflective practices can be part of the culture of an institution rather than an add-on or part of an isolated course or unique program.

- *Inform public policy through outreach scholarship:* A significant and valued role universities play in communities is as "the local think tank." Universities are viewed as possessing both expertise and authority on social issues and, therefore, uniquely positioned to provide valuable support for public decision-making processes. Policymakers need data, knowledge, and guidance before making public policy decisions, and universities can bridge that gap. After citing examples of faculty scholarship that guided public policy decisions, forum participants agreed that, having access to knowledge resources "is like having your own Rand or Brookings Institute next door. And because it is local, it has more credibility."

Because of their depth of knowledge and expertise, universities are uniquely positioned to advocate for social justice through the academic research they support. Participants complained that the link between social change and academic scholarship is weak and that research on pressing social issues is often untimely. Citing affirmative action as an example, participants complained that the compelling research needed to support equity and access in education came after opponents to affirmative action had "almost won the argument!" Higher education can strengthen its role in public life by renewing its commitment to social change, engaging in research that concerns critical public issues, and advocating on behalf of particular solutions to an issue or problem.

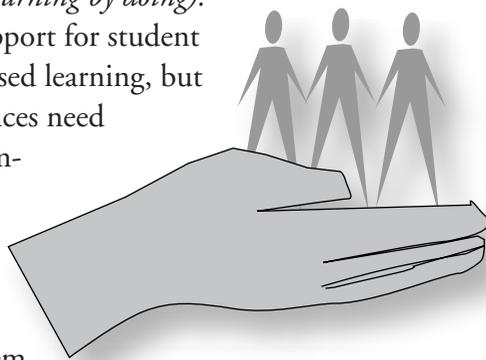
- *Play a convening role:* Campuses frequently organize and host public forums and private initiatives to highlight pressing social issues. Often viewed as possessing credibility and stature in

communities, universities can play a significant role in bringing together interested individuals from private industry, government, and communities around social issues. This convening role can be particularly powerful when the university president visibly assumes a leadership role. By leveraging institutional leadership when convening groups around public concerns, campuses can widen the circle of participants in a discussion.

- *Link theory and practice (learning by doing):*

Forum participants expressed support for student volunteerism and community-based learning, but also suggested that these experiences need some reworking. Participants complained that too many campuses present interns to community-

based organizations saying, “Here are our students. Here is what they need to learn. Plug them in.” A better approach would be to link experiential learning to the institution’s and the student’s present and future roles as members of the community. All community-based learning and volunteer initiatives can be grounded in prior dialogue in which campuses ask communities, “What do you need?” and “What can the university contribute to make these students more suited when they come back to you, when they assume their role in the community?” Students should not be presented to those organizations before they have studied the community, its strengths, its challenges, and initiatives already under way to build that community.



Community-based learning experiences can be organized as collaborative, rather than individual, initiatives. Rather than organizing service-learning activities that are one-to-one, campuses can explore ways that student teams can work with public and nonprofit organizations. Group work, one participant emphasized, “can be a powerful corrective to the ‘Lone Ranger’ mentality that dominates society, the view that problems are solved by individual action. In fact, [problems] are solved by community cohesion.”

Participants also suggested that community-based learning be restructured as three-way partnerships linking the nonprofit organization, government agencies, and the university. This would enable students to see the public relevance of their work and, by

offering students the opportunity to seek out relevant government units, would enable students to see the interdisciplinary nature of community work. Students can play a valuable role brokering relationships between typically isolated government units.

- *Teach collaborative problem-solving skills across the curriculum:* Colleges and universities support faculty efforts to enhance teaching styles and model the deliberative process in the classroom. Forum participants agreed that the ability to participate in a discussion, facilitate or moderate a dialogue, think critically and creatively, advocate a position, and negotiate or mediate toward solutions — essential conflict resolution and social change tools — are central to all student learning across all disciplines. Participants recommended that students be afforded the opportunity to cultivate these skills in the classroom, in the campus community, and in external communities.

- *Encourage student activism and leadership:* Many forum participants shared the belief that “students ought to be activists.” The responsibility of colleges and universities is not only to facilitate students’ exploration of their values and beliefs, but also to provide students with opportunities and encouragement to act on those beliefs. Encouraging student activism can be part of an institution’s definition of excellence and among the responsibilities of faculty members.

*“Students ought to be activists.”*

Participants suggested that encouraging student activism can be risky in that students might challenge the institution or the community, creating discomfort. If educators encourage students to vote, they must accept for whom they vote. Colleges and universities, like students, need to stretch their own comfort levels as well.

- *Create the image of a “college town”:* In rural areas and defined urban areas, forum participants expressed enthusiasm for the enhanced quality of life a university can bring to the community. When colleges and universities offer faculty outreach-scholarship and consulting, student volunteers, presidential leadership, economic contributions, cultural and athletic events, museums, theaters, spaces for public initiatives, and sometimes access to sophisticated technology, college towns can be vital places to live and work.

Colleges and universities can do more for communities by contracting with local vendors. They can provide faculty and staff incentives to live locally. They can encourage faculty and staff to

model responsible citizenship by participating in public processes, running for local office, serving on boards, and volunteering. They can also improve town-gown relations by working collaboratively with communities to develop strategies that curb disruptive or destructive student behavior.

## **Where to Start: In the Communities**

What does it mean to be a community and to be an individual or institutional member of that community? What is our vision of the community, what should it look like, and how does its current state compare with that vision?

Listening to Communities participants urged colleges and universities to join together with each other and with their surrounding communities to engage in dialogue around these questions. Universities and communities can jointly shape a vision that addresses local concerns and institutional efforts to prepare the next generation of citizens. One participant suggested that universities and communities jointly compose a memorandum of understanding that reflects a shared philosophy on institutional and student responsibility and community engagement. This memorandum or shared vision can then serve as text to inform student learning experiences both in and out of the classroom, to inform faculty outreach-scholarship, and guide new community-university partnerships.

Higher education is making considerable efforts to educate for democracy and be a valuable institutional member of a community. Yet despite countless initiatives, forum participants, exemplars of civic engagement, nonetheless worry that these efforts are insufficient, fragmented, temporary, or disconnected. In the end, colleges and universities are doing too little to educate their successors. What higher education needs, forum participants argued, is a whole new way of thinking, that is interdisciplinary, holistic, crosscutting, and linked to a larger vision for the surrounding community and for American democracy.



# Institutional Responses to Listening to Communities, Next Steps

## 1. **Develop a vision of the campus community, the surrounding community and region, and of American society.**

- A Values Audit: What kind of community do we want this campus to be? What values are central to this institution? (Fairness and equity? Integrity? Trustworthiness and honesty?) Are our practices consistent with our written documents? Are we making choices that are consistent with institutional values? Do we value, for example, both autonomy and collaboration? How do we reconcile these two seemingly inconsistent interests? Are we obliged to promote actively the well-being of others, or simply “do no harm”? Examine institutional values through surveys, interviews, focus groups, and dialogues. Involve those most affected by the conclusions: students, faculty, staff, trustees, and institutional leaders.
- Develop a vision with the community of the community: Convene a range of community representatives — community organizers, religious leaders, politicians, business leaders, small-business owners, teachers, firefighters, police officers, directors of nonprofit organizations, foundation executives — to collectively develop a vision for the community, identifying community assets and pressing social issues. Involve multiple higher education institutions and a wide range of academic expertise in the dialogues. Consider ways to bring more players to the table, for example, by creating a core group and then convening a series of roundtables that are issue-specific. Ask, What are area colleges and universities doing well? How can they be doing better? How can we collectively cultivate the next generation of active, community-oriented citizens? Bring that vision back to the campus and ask, What can each of us do, as individuals and collectively, to achieve that vision? Convene campus representatives to discuss the community’s aims and perceptions.
- Explore the link between the campus values, the community’s vision, and American democracy. What social conditions allow the development of democratic institutions? How can American democracy be consciously maintained? Educators, social and political scientists and others warn that Americans

are so disconnected from each other and from social and political institutions that the strength of American democracy is at risk. How do these warnings compare with the civic health of this community? Convene multiple constituencies on campus to discuss these, and other, questions.

**2. Assess the institution's educational programs, cocurricular activities, and community-based partnerships.**

- Take an inventory and/or map the institution's capacity to enhance the curriculum, programs, activities, and partnerships.
- Explore the link between democracy and education. How does the institution balance the goals of enabling individual achievement and prosperity and cultivating a sense of responsibility to participate actively, if not passionately, in building communities and society in general? Do students graduate with the conscience and skills they need to be active, community-oriented citizens? Does the institution purposefully teach the arts of democracy?

**3. Focus on the classroom: teaching public responsibility with society as text. This involves employing the ten areas of recommendations made by the Listening to Communities participants.**

**4. Learning by doing: community-based service**

- Adding experiential, service, and community-based learning components to courses and programs.
- Providing supportive structures for student volunteerism.
- Offering community-based clinical programs linked to professional development.
- Grounding community-based learning experiences on dialogue and a shared vision of the community.
- Restructuring community-based learning experiences to be collective/group rather than individual experiences.
- Restructuring community-based learning experiences around issues rather than sites.
- Restructuring community-based learning experiences as three-way partnerships: institution, nonprofit organization, and government.

## **5. Modeling democratic values and the arts of democracy through participatory processes and dialogue on campus**

- Building the capacity of individuals on campus to develop their sense of voice, critical judgment, empathy, reciprocity, commitment to action, mediation, creative listening, and organizing.
- Building community on campus around shared values, integrity, diversity, social justice, civic responsibility.
- Building community on campus around a collectively developed vision.
- Supporting permanent structures for faculty development around engaging teaching and learning methods.
- Fostering a culture of dialogue and collaborative action by modeling them.
- Understanding and promoting diversity as an educational resource.
- Engaging the individuals most directly affected by the policies or practices under consideration.
- Encouraging student activism; supporting student groups committed to organizing, leading, and taking community-based action.
- Creating student codes of conduct, alcohol policies, judicial systems, and academic honor systems that engage students as organizers and implementers.
- Developing collectively an honor code or institutional statement on values and philosophy.
- Supporting participatory, action, and applied research methods that involve students as researchers; supporting faculty and student research that leads to social action and change.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> “What Higher Education Can Do in the Cause of Citizenship.” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 6, 1995, B1.
- <sup>2</sup> A longer report on the project Listening to Communities that served as the basis for this article is available through the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Office of Community Partnerships, which generously supported the writing of the report.
- <sup>3</sup> Listening to Communities was made possible by support from the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation.
- <sup>4</sup> Forums were held in Albuquerque, Cleveland, Defiance (OH), New York City, Brochton (MA), Bloomfield (NJ), San Francisco, and Forest Grove (OR).

# THE CIVIC MISSION QUESTION IN LAND GRANT EDUCATION

By Scott Peters

In his groundbreaking book, *Scholarship Reconsidered*, Ernest Boyer asked: “Can America’s colleges and universities, with all the richness of their resources, be of greater service to the nation and the world? Can we define scholarship in ways that respond more adequately to the urgent new realities both within the academy and beyond?”<sup>1</sup>

While these questions are relevant for all sectors of American higher education, they hold an especially deep significance for the nationwide system of land grant colleges and universities.

Created through the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890, the land grant system is composed of 106 institutions located in all 50 states, plus the District of Columbia and several U. S. territories.<sup>2</sup>

It includes many of the nation’s top research universities, 17 historically black institutions, and 30 tribal colleges that were given land grant status in 1994. It also includes the federal Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES). With a budget of almost \$1 billion for fiscal year 2001, CSREES works to “advance a global system of research, extension, and higher education in the food and agricultural sciences and related environmental and human sciences to benefit people, communities, and the nation.”<sup>3</sup>

CSREES involves more than 9,600 local Extension agents working in 3,150 counties, 3 million volunteers, 5.6 million youth involved in 4-H projects and programs, and more than 9,500 scientists conducting research at 59 state agricultural experiment stations.<sup>4</sup>

Here is a system with an amazing wealth of resources, a strong public mission, and a tradition of scholarship that responds to realities outside the academy. But here also is a system that could, in Boyer’s words, be of greater service to the nation and world. The need to be of greater service was a central theme of a series of six reports published from 1997 to 2000 by the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land Grant Universities.<sup>5</sup>

In the final report in the series, the commission wrote: “We

believe that our institutions serve not only as agents of this democracy, but also as its architects — providing bridges between the aims and aspirations of individuals and the public work of the larger world. To that end, we commit our institutions to wide-ranging examinations of our civic and democratic purposes through curricula and extracurricular activities, socially engaged scholarship, civic partnerships, and community-based learning and research.”<sup>6</sup>

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Taken together, Boyer’s challenge and the Kellogg Commission’s reports bring a new level of attention to the civic mission question in land grant education. The question is not whether or not land grant institutions have a civic mission. No one would argue that they don’t. Rather, the question is, what exactly *is* this mission, and how — through what kinds of work — should it be pursued?

In recent decades, the dominant answer to this question has often been framed almost exclusively in terms of economics. As I discovered while I was living in Minnesota during the 1990s, politicians from both parties used the same image when proclaiming their support for the University of Minnesota, a world-class research university that also serves as the state’s land grant institution. The university is important, they all agreed, because it functions as the “economic engine” of the state.



Economics is important. But the civic challenges and issues we face in this nation reach well beyond economics. Our civic *aspirations* reach beyond economics as well. However materialistic and individualistic this nation has become, the ideas (and ideals) of democracy and citizenship have not yet been abandoned. We still aspire to be citizens in a democracy, not just consumers in the marketplace. If land grant institutions are to be of “greater service” not only in addressing our civic challenges but also in contributing to the realization of our civic aspirations, their civic mission and work will need to involve more than economics.

In constructing an answer to the civic mission question in land grant education that includes but reaches beyond economics, we need to do two things. First, we need to gain some historical perspective in order to give us a better appreciation of how central

the connection between democracy and land grant education has been. Second, we need to shift the discussion of civic mission away from abstract generalizations that float above and apart from the complex realities of our lives and communities. A broader view of our civic mission and the work it will take to pursue it can't be found apart from these realities. It can only be found by immersing ourselves in them.

## **Democracy and Land Grant Education**

The civic mission question in land grant education is linked to the long-standing view that land grant institutions have a special commitment not just to economics, but also to *democracy*, expressed in terms of the institutions' approach to education and the ends they aim to achieve. From the late nineteenth century through the World War II period, there was a robust civic rhetoric in the speeches and writings of administrators that articulated this commitment. For example, at the Forty-Fifth Annual Convention of the Association of Land Grant Colleges and Universities held in 1931, W. J. Kerr, president of Oregon State Agricultural College, declared that it was the "ideal of democratized education in the United States that led to the founding of the land grant institutions." Kerr argued that while land grant institutions might have helped to advance individual opportunity for social and economic mobility, and while they might have made contributions to increasing the material wealth of the nation through the application of science to agriculture and other fields of work, in his view there were "other values, even more important [which had resulted] from the work of these institutions." These were the "intangible benefits that enter into the thought and ideals of the people, leavening the whole lump of civic and social life." Kerr declared that these benefits were "undoubtedly the larger and loftier contribution of the land grant institutions to the states and the nation."<sup>7</sup>

The historical literature is filled with speeches and papers that echo Kerr's view of the connection between democracy and land grant education. A review of this literature is important, but to bring the civic mission question in land grant education to life in today's world, we need to view it in relation to specific public challenges and issues. Although we can look in any number of areas of work for specific examples, it's especially fitting to look to agriculture, since agriculture is (and always has been) a key area of

focus in land grant education. In looking to agriculture, we can ask: What public issues and challenges does agriculture involve that might help us see and understand the civic mission and work of land grant education? Furthermore, is there a way of framing such challenges so that faculty, staff, and students from the full range of disciplines and departments of land grant universities — not just the agricultural sciences — might find a role in addressing them?

## The Challenge of Sustainability

The central challenge in agriculture today is the challenge of facilitating sustainability (or “sustainable development” as it is often termed). While sustainability is a contested concept, there is a fair amount of agreement that it includes some balanced or integrated attention to economic, environmental, and social concerns. An example of a concise definition of sustainable development that incorporates all three of these concerns can be found in Minnesota state law. In 1996, the Minnesota Legislature passed a statute that defined sustainable development as “development that maintains or enhances economic opportunity and community well-being while protecting and restoring the natural environment upon which people and economies depend.”<sup>8</sup>

While statements such as these enjoy wide support, the difficulty comes in figuring out how to pursue them in specific places, in relation to specific things. As Jules Pretty writes in his superb book on the sustainability challenge in agriculture, “In any discussion of sustainability, it is important to clarify what is being sustained, for how long, for whose benefit and at what cost, over what area and measured by what criteria.”<sup>9</sup>

Pretty adds that answering these questions is difficult, not only because it’s difficult to determine what the relevant “facts” are, but because it involves “assessing and trading off values and beliefs.” In other words, the sustainability challenge in agriculture is not merely a technical challenge, it’s also a political and cultural challenge.

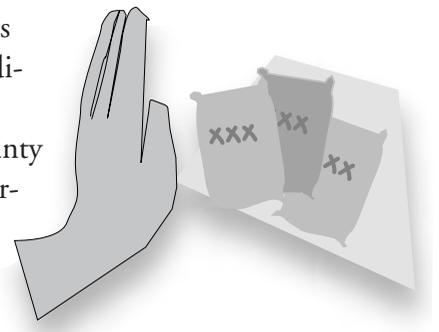
In order to understand what the sustainability challenge in agriculture might suggest for the civic mission and work of land grant institutions, we need to look at a specific, real-world example. Let’s consider an example from Rice County, Minnesota. Over an eight-year period (1989 to 1997), this rural county located about 40 miles south of the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan

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area was embroiled in a highly contentious battle over whether and how it should regulate feedlots, which are buildings designed for the confined feeding, breeding, raising, and holding of animals. In the Rice County case, the animals in question were hogs.

The battle over the regulation of feedlots in Rice County began in February of 1989, when Kent Holden, a Rice County area landowner and part-owner of a family farm corporation called Holden Farms, applied to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) for a permit to construct and operate a 4,730-hog commercial feedlot on 438 acres of farmland. Existing state and local regulations and zoning laws at the time did not require public notification of or input into the construction of facilities like Holden's. Residents of the Circle and Fox Lake area of Rice County, located one mile southwest of the site of the new feedlot, learned of Holden's plans only after construction began. Several of them were alarmed and angered by the project. They formed a group called the "Forest Township Agri-Lakes Association," in order to "preserve and enhance the quality of life in Forest Township." They declared themselves in opposition to the construction of the Holden facility, spoke out against the lack of public input and notification, and vowed to take legal action to stop the new feedlot from being built. They held public meetings to discuss the situation, which attracted as many as 150 area residents.

In a letter to the editor of the *Northfield News*, a spokesperson for the Agri-Lakes Association declared that they were opposed to the construction of Holden's feedlot because they believed that "this operation, located 80 to 100 feet in elevation above two nearby recreational lakes with minimal land area for waste disposal, poses serious threats to surface water quality due to run-off, and to groundwater quality due to leaching. At risk are Circle and Fox Lakes, Wolf Creek and other streams, wetlands, springs and residential wells." The group sent petitions to Rice County Commissioners requesting changes in county zoning ordinances to restrict large-scale commercial feedlot operations. They wanted the county to require new or expanding feedlot operations to obtain conditional use permits, and they wanted local residents to be informed in advance of

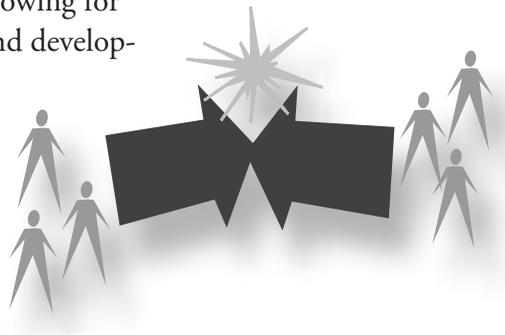


such operations and to be allowed a formal channel for voicing their concerns.

Meanwhile, the *Northfield News* weighed in with its views on the issue. In an editorial titled “Tolerance Needed,” the editors described the conflict over the Holden feedlot as a “classic clash of farm and rural nonfarm interests. It speaks to the increasing influence of the metro area and the slow shift in the county’s identity.” They noted that while agriculture no longer received a “united front” support in the county, it was still the county’s biggest industry. They pointed to the fact that Rice County produced more than \$70 million in agricultural products in 1987, almost two-thirds of which were livestock or livestock related. Expressing confidence in the judgment of state officials that Holden’s plan posed no threat to lake quality, they declared that “nonfarm rural resident and lakeshore dwellers” should “exhibit some tolerance and understanding” for their neighbors who have a “right to farm.”

After many twists and turns in the story and years of public debate and study, the Rice County Board voted in August of 1996 to adopt a restrictive feedlot ordinance that was described in the press as “one of the most aggressive steps yet taken by a local Minnesota government in the effort to curb corporate farm growth and feedlot development.” Depending on which side of the issue a member of the county stood, the ordinance was either viewed as “antiagriculture,” a “social experiment” which is “not justified on any economic or scientific basis,” or as a prudent, “well-researched and well-documented” measure that will help protect the environment while allowing for “sustainable” economic growth and development.

No other issue in Rice County during these years generated anything close to the controversy and attention as this did. Nearly 400 news articles, editorials, opinion pieces, and letters to the editor related to the issue were published in the county’s two local newspapers over the course of the battle. Numerous public hearings were also held, many of which were contentious, attracting large numbers of concerned and often angry citizens. Citizens’ groups on both sides of the battle were



formed, lawsuits were filed or threatened, and piles of data and studies were collected and produced to support each side's views. The battle ended or harmed lifelong friendships, split families, polarized county government, and heightened tensions, disagreements, and uncertainties over the direction of development in the county.

The story of the battle over the regulation of feedlots in Rice County raises a host of complex, interrelated issues and questions, not only for the citizens of the county and the rest of the state of Minnesota, but for the nation as a whole. Everywhere communities are being faced with similar challenges: how to engage citizens with conflicting values and beliefs in the public policy-making process; how to respond to shifts in demographics; how to protect the environment while also pursuing economic growth and development; and how to respond to the growing pressures, anxieties, and changes brought about by an increasingly competitive global economy.

Several times during the course of the public debate over regulating feedlots, the idea was put forward that the responsibility for making a decision should be turned over to scientific experts who were thought to be able to objectively determine what the "facts" were with respect to the issues involved. In one opinion piece published in the *Northfield News*, a farmer who opposed the county's desire to limit feedlots argued that the whole debate really just boiled down to a "technical question." Therefore, he wrote, the correct solution could only come from "unbiased people with technical expertise."<sup>10</sup>

This view was put forward at various times by people on both sides of the conflict. It stood at odds with a different view, also put forward by persons on both sides, which stressed the idea that the regulation of feedlots must not simply be viewed as a technical or economic matter, but as a political and/or ethical matter involving rights, power, justice, and moral principles.

### **The Civic Mission Question**

With this brief sketch of a real-world example in mind, let's return to the civic mission question in land grant education. For the University of Minnesota in particular, what might the Rice County example suggest? The work that needed to be done in this case was the work of coming to public judgment about what ought to be done with respect to the regulation of feedlots. How

could or should University of Minnesota faculty, staff, and students contribute to this work?

Here is where we can begin to see the value of an idea that has been discussed in past issues of this journal: the idea of “public scholarship.” Introducing the idea of public scholarship encourages us to ask how a scholar’s work of constructing and communicating knowledge might contribute to community-building, to public problem solving, to public creation, and to the process of coming to public judgment on what ought to be done (not just what can or might be done) to address important public issues and problems. At the broadest level, we can ask: Is there a practice of scholarship that stands scholars with the (or a) public in addressing matters of public importance and, if so, what are its dimensions, dynamics, challenges, and promise?

In the Rice County case, there was an incredibly complex mix of issues embedded in the feedlot regulation challenge that provided opportunities for public scholarship across a broad range of disciplines. In the short term, there was a need for knowledge about the economic, technical, environmental, health, civic, and ethical dimensions and implications of feedlots, along with a need for a workable process that would help people with sharply different perspectives and interests come to public judgment about what regulation, if any, should be adopted. But the feedlot challenge also raised or revealed a host of long-term issues and questions involving the future of agriculture, the nature of development, and the health and vitality of the county’s public life.

Was there any public scholarship that was done in this case that proved useful in addressing these short- and long-term issues and questions? My answer to this question is short and simple: I don’t know. In this case, and hundreds like it across the country, no one has intentionally asked the civic mission and work question, or else it hasn’t been asked in such a way as to give us insight into the public dimensions of the scholarship that may have taken place. Because of this, what we “know” about civic mission and work in land grant education is, for the most part, undocumented and untheorized. This leaves us with a flat and somewhat vague answer to the question about how land grant faculty, staff, and students might contribute to cases such as the one in Rice County. This answer is roughly as follows: research faculty and graduate students contribute through conducting scientific studies on specific issues or questions, and Extension educators con-

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tribute by translating the findings of these studies into understandable language and bringing them to the decision-making table, along with occasionally playing a “neutral” facilitating role at public forums.

There are many problems with this answer. First, it encourages us to frame the solutions to situations like the one in Rice County only in technical terms. But the case in Rice County involved far more than narrow technical questions, as important as those were. It also involved a host of civic and cultural issues and questions. A larger framing of this case would help capture these dimensions, and thus put it in the context of the challenge of sustainability. And this would have the additional benefit of inviting faculty and students from nonagricultural departments and disciplines — for example, the arts and humanities — to imagine a role for themselves in the work, something that is not encouraged with a narrow technical framing.

A second problem with the answer is that it doesn't say anything about *how* faculty and graduate students should focus and conduct their technical research: for example, how they should construct and pursue their research questions, or what measures or standards or criteria they should employ for evaluating the policy implications of their results. Another related problem is that it sharply limits the role of Extension educators, viewing them mainly as neutral information providers and meeting facilitators. These roles are important, but insufficient. Extension also has a key role to play in the complex political negotiation and organizing work that is inescapably embedded in situations like the one in Rice County. This work must be placed inside our view of what Extension work should involve, as it was, with much success, in the early decades of Extension's history.

In addition to these problems, the default answer to the civic mission and work question is silent about the deeply important matter of what, if anything, faculty, students, and Extension educators should stand for or be committed to as they engage with others in addressing public issues. Should they be committed to the “facts,” as science reveals them to us? Should they be committed to advancing the economic bottom line? Should they stand for the environment? Should they stand for the principle of democracy, and for the civility, integrity, and vitality of the democratic process? Or is their real challenge to somehow stand for all of these together?

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This line of questioning eventually leads to a broad, overarching question: What is the central aim or object of land grant education? While the answer to this question is and always has been a matter of debate, a perspective has run throughout the history of land grant institutions that sees it as having something to do with democracy. To understand the essence of this perspective, I want to turn to a few passages from the old civic rhetoric of administrators that are particularly instructive in relation to the Rice County case.

In his presidential address at the twenty-fifth annual convention of the Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations in 1911, W. H. Jordan, who served as director of the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station from 1896 to 1921, said the following:

It has been reported, though I do not credit the statement, that a member of an agricultural college faculty once declared that the business of his institution was to bring about the production of more hogs at greater profit. If this remark was made, what a spectacle it pictures! It places the hog at the pinnacle of educational aspiration, with the man as a lesser figure.<sup>11</sup>

A few years later, Liberty Hyde Bailey, who served as dean of the New York State College of Agriculture at Cornell University from 1903 to 1913, clarified the core principle behind Jordan's statement. In his classic book published in 1915, *The Holy Earth*, Bailey wrote:

It is not sufficient to train technically in the trades and crafts and arts to the end of securing greater economic efficiency — this may be accomplished in a despotism and result in no self-action on the part of the people. Every democracy must reach far beyond what is commonly known as economic efficiency, and do everything it can to enable those in the backgrounds to maintain their standing and their pride and to partake in the making of political affairs.<sup>12</sup>

Bailey's words from 1915 help us see the inadequacy of an answer to the civic mission question that is framed exclusively around economics. It also helps us see the historical roots of the call put forward in 2000 by the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land Grant Universities. The commission's call for land grant institutions to "serve not only as agents of this democracy, but also as its architects," is a call for the renewal of a civic mission that is not just about enhancing economic growth

and efficiency, but also about the enhancement of the political “standing and pride” of the common people. This mission can’t be achieved solely through the delivery of neutral technical services. It must be pursued through public work efforts that join together the talents, intelligence, wisdom, and creative energies of a broad range of people acting as citizens of a vibrant democracy committed to the commonwealth. To see land grant education not as a neutral service but as public work is to see it in light of its best tradition. The renewal of this tradition is one of the most important tasks we face.

### **Approaches to Renewal**

There will be many avenues for pursuing the civic renewal process in land grant education. I want to briefly point to three of them. First, it is important and useful to create a vehicle at specific institutions that provides visibility to the civic mission question, and a meaningful way for faculty, staff, students, and others to engage in exploring it. Such a vehicle has been created at the University of Minnesota, where a Civic Engagement Task Force has been established by the Office of the Provost. The task force is charged with strengthening the university’s civic mission across the full range of its activities and making practical proposals for institutionalizing civic engagement as a continuing priority.<sup>13</sup> Through public forums, working groups, and seed grants for new initiatives, the task force is helping to dramatically increase the seriousness and scope of the university’s intentional commitment to civic engagement. This approach can, and should, inspire similar efforts at other institutions.

There is another approach to the renewal process that should not be overlooked. Following one of the key organizing principles that civil rights leader Ella Baker promoted, we must find, learn from, and support those who are already working: in this case, those who are already doing the work of public scholarship.<sup>14</sup> We must do this not merely to celebrate or acknowledge those who are doing this work, but to learn from them the lessons that will help us deepen and expand it.

Fortunately, there are some good models to draw from that will help us follow Baker’s principle. In my own work, I am drawing heavily from an approach developed by John Forester, chair of the Department of City and Regional Planning at Cornell. Forester and his students have spent much of the past decade

developing hundreds of richly detailed “practitioner profiles” of planners in an effort to understand and encourage participatory planning processes. His recent book, *The Deliberative Practitioner* (MIT Press, 1999), is a masterful analysis of the lessons gleaned from these profiles. In several different projects, I am adapting Forester’s approach and applying it to the work of land grant faculty and Extension educators.

For example, recently I had graduate students in a course I teach on community education and development create practitioner profiles of Cornell Cooperative Extension educators focusing on specific examples of their work. These profiles, which are edited transcripts of tape-recorded interviews, gave the class a window into the fine-grained nuances of Extension educators’ civic work. They also gave Extension educators, Extension administration, and campus faculty a window into Cornell’s civic practice that was not previously available. I have hopes that the profiles we develop over the next few years might provide lessons for improving and expanding this practice.

In another project, supported by the Kettering Foundation, I’m working with a team of colleagues to build a practical theory of public scholarship in land grant education, drawn from a close analysis of practitioner profiles and case studies from seven land grant institutions. We will use what we learn as a resource for the ongoing work of organizing faculty, staff, students, and community members in new public work initiatives.

Finally, in the face of the fact that the task of civic renewal in land grant education is something of a long shot, cutting as it does against the grain of an academic culture that leans heavily in another direction, there is a need to take a prophetic stance: that is, a stance that draws inspiration and authority from the best vision of what land grant institutions have stood for, while being mindful of why this vision has never been fully achieved. One thing we will need for this task is new historical research devoted to developing a deeper understanding of our civic heritage. I suspect that a deeper understanding of this heritage will teach us that the pursuit of a civic mission in land grant education has always been difficult, that there have always been abundant reasons to doubt its prospects. But it will also reveal to us our prophetic figures, the Liberty Hyde Baileys of our history, who stood firmly for the land grant idea’s democratic aims and took a leap of faith in what might be accomplished, despite the odds.

If the contemporary movement for civic renewal in land grant education is to grow and bear fruit, it will do so because of the faith and works of our modern-day prophets. We needn't wait long for them to appear. They're already at work, in small and large ways here and there, all across the country. Let's support and learn from them.

*The author would like to acknowledge gratefully the insightful and helpful criticism of an earlier draft of this paper provided by Margo Hittleman, Harry Boyte, Peg Michels, Nick Jordan, Maggi Adamek, and Heidi Haugan.*

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- <sup>2</sup> Land grant institutions are members of the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC), the nation's oldest higher education association. See the association's Web site [<http://www.nasulgc.org>] for more information.
- <sup>3</sup> "About CSREES," <http://www.reeusda.gov/1700/about/csreesa2.htm#is>.
- <sup>4</sup> Statistics drawn from the CSREES Web site, <http://www.reeusda.gov/1700/about/csreesa2.htm#is>.
- <sup>5</sup> The commission's reports are posted at <http://www.nasulgc.org/Kellogg/kellogg.htm>.
- <sup>6</sup> Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land Grant Universities, *Renewing the Covenant: Learning, Discovery, and Engagement in a New Age and Different World* (Washington, DC: National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, 2000), p. 24. In this passage the commission is drawing from Harry Boyte and Elizabeth Hollander, *Wingspread Declaration on Renewing the Civic Mission of the American Research University* (Racine, WI: The Johnson Foundation, 1999).
- <sup>7</sup> W. J. Kerr, "The Spirit of Land Grant Institutions." In *Proceedings of the Forty-Fifth Annual Convention of the Association of Land Grant Colleges and Universities* (Burlington, VT: Free Press Printing Co., 1932), pp. 90, 101.
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- <sup>13</sup> See the task force's Web site, <http://www1.umn.edu/civic/index.html>.
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# ON THE ROLE OF TRUSTEES:

## An Interview with William C. Hubbard

Higher Education Exchange *coeditor David Brown asked William C. Hubbard, who just completed his term as chair of the board of trustees of the University of South Carolina, to share his experience and views on the role of trustees in helping to better connect their institutions to public life.*

**Brown:** How and why did you become a trustee?

**Hubbard:** I attended the University of South Carolina on an academic scholarship and was energized and stimulated by quality faculty who opened my eyes to the world. I have always been interested in public service, and I could think of no better nor more rewarding way to be of service to the public than to promote higher education, especially at the major public university to which I owe great allegiance.

I became a trustee on my election to the board by joint session of the South Carolina General Assembly in 1986.

**Brown:** Recently, one commentator described trustees as “ratifying major policies, giving money and caring about the reputation of their respective schools.” Is there more to trustee agendas than that characterization?

**Hubbard:** There is more to the trustee agenda than that characterization, though giving money and caring about the reputation of their school are important obligations of trustees. I prefer to view the trustees’ role on policy as one of collaboration with the administration and faculty of the institution. To a certain extent, there is ratification, but on fundamental and strategic initiatives, trustees view their role on a higher plane.

**Brown:** Another commentator describes trustees as “nonacademic citizens” who help make the university “legitimately public” even though such laypersons are “part-time, generally unpaid, and have their primary commitments elsewhere.” Is such oversight and authority real or just imagined?

**Hubbard:** The oversight of trustees is at times real and at times imagined. Of course, trustees bear the ultimate responsibility for the tenure of the president. That authority places the ultimate responsibility for the institution in the hands of the

board. That authority and the responsibility of the board to the public for the fiscal integrity of the institution are important pillars of authority for the board. On the other hand, trustees are often not provided with information in a format that allows them to understand deeply overarching problems that affect the progress of the institution. Too often our input is sought after the situational dynamics of an issue are fixed and our options are limited.

**Brown:** As you know, the trustee role in higher education was more conspicuous, even dominant, in the nineteenth century and early twentieth. By the 1960s, the influence of trustees and presidents had diminished as faculty, staff, and students became more organized and assertive. How should that balance be dealt with at the start of a new century?

**Hubbard:** The balance should be dealt with by collaboration. Trustees are often isolated from faculty because the information provided to trustees largely is filtered through administrators. Trustees need more direct contact with deans and faculty in an atmosphere of true discussion, not as participants in a scripted meeting with programmed responses. I am rarely disappointed by the renewed respect that trustees have for faculty and faculty for trustees when the two groups are put together on joint projects. It should not be a question of which group is dominant; it is a question of collaboration and consensus in an environment of team work fostered by open dialogue.

**Brown:** If faculty commitments are primarily to their respective bodies of knowledge and not to their institutions, what can trustees do to alter such alignments?

**Hubbard:** I do not believe that faculty commitment should be primarily to their respective bodies of knowledge, if that implies a secondary role for teaching and mentoring. I believe that responsibility to one's discipline is concurrent with an obligation to the institution, especially the students that the faculty serve. Trustees can alter these alignments through the reward structure, by providing remuneration for loyal faculty who contribute significantly to teaching, research, and service to the institution and the community.

**Brown:** When we talked things over last June, you told me about faculty awards in your university system. How did that come about?

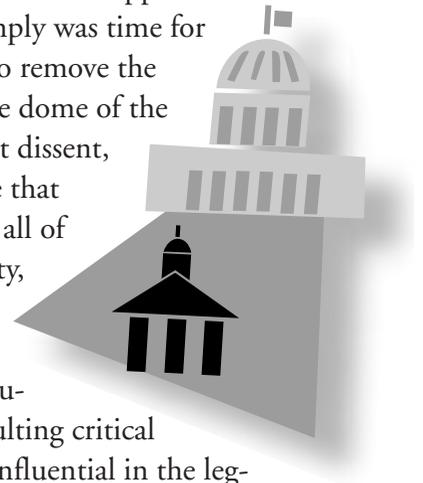
**Hubbard:** The board of trustees wanted to send a signal to

*Trustees need more direct contact with deans and faculty in an atmosphere of true discussion.*

the faculty that their work was respected and valued by the board. The board wanted to create an annual award for a faculty member who embodied the best traditions of teaching, research, and service. This award also has a small monetary award from funds donated by each member of the board.

**Brown:** In our earlier conversation you also mentioned the “Confederate flag dispute” in your state. Could you elaborate on that and its significance for your work as a trustee?

**Hubbard:** The Confederate flag flying over the dome of the South Carolina State House was a very divisive symbol. The University of South Carolina lies in the shadow of the State House and has an undergraduate enrollment that is approximately 19 percent African-American. It simply was time for the state of South Carolina to take action to remove the flag from this position of sovereignty on the dome of the State House. The board of trustees, without dissent, voted to urge the General Assembly to take that action to remove the flag out of respect for all of our students and as a sign that the university, as an institution that embodies truth and justice, would take a public position on a matter of great public interest. Other institutions passed resolutions as well and the resulting critical mass of support for the flag’s removal was influential in the legislative action that removed the flag from the dome and from the chambers of the House and Senate.



*Public universities can reengage with the publics they serve if they bring their best minds together to address the important issues of our day.*

It was important for trustees of a public university to take a leadership position on an important matter of public interest.

**Brown:** You speak of the public university as a leader, not a follower. Why do you think that is important?

**Hubbard:** Universities bring together the best minds in a myriad of disciplines. It is critical that these minds, in an atmosphere of interdisciplinary exchange, address the most complex and difficult issues of our time. Public universities can reengage with the publics they serve if they bring their best minds together to address the important issues of our day. In that way, public universities can offer courses of action or solutions to important problems and thus promote our progress. These institutions should be stimulating debate and discussion in the marketplace of ideas as a way to promote social, cultural, and economic progress.

**Brown:** David Mathews emphasizes the “public-making”

rather than the “public-serving” capacity or potential of the university. From your experience, is that possible?

**Hubbard:** It is possible for universities to serve a “public-making” capacity. Though there is more to the distinction than semantics, the important goal is to reconnect universities to the public and foster citizen participation in the issues of the day. I believe that there has been a disconnect between universities and their respective publics. We need to create easily identifiable portals for the exchange of ideas and actions between universities and their publics. To the extent that public-making calls for universities to identify issues and engender discussion about our social, economic, cultural, and scientific status and progress, then that role needs to be emphasized.

**Brown:** What do you think are the causes for the academy’s withdrawal from public life? What would have to change for higher education to become a serious participant in rebuilding public life?

**Hubbard:** Unfortunately, I believe that the academy’s withdrawal from public life can be attributed, at least in part, to the diminution of rewards for public service. Compensation should reflect the value of participation in public life. Once the connection is reestablished, then faculty will see the benefits of such participation for its own sake.

**Brown:** How should the faculty and the academy prepare graduates for public life?

**Hubbard:** By ensuring a broad core curriculum of essential subjects as part of every student’s academic experience. Building on that, the institution should then not be fearful of holding high the values of discipline, hard work, honesty, good citizenship, and respect for divergent views. Faculty should never underestimate their influence as role models.

**Brown:** What would you like to see trustees do to reconnect their institutions to the public?

**Hubbard:** Trustees must better articulate the importance of higher education to the grass roots of their communities and states. We do not adequately describe the importance of academic work as an increasingly essential component for economic success. We need to describe the research, emphasize the importance of scholarship, and prove to the public that it is the preservation and the creation of ideas that drive our progress, and thus make the case for the university. Trustees should also develop and clearly

state policies for their institutions that reflect the expectation that universities must lead the social, cultural, intellectual, and economic progress of the states they serve. Trustees must be the liaisons between the public and the academy — in effect, bridges between the two that help legitimize the university to the public and connect the institution to the public it serves.

**Brown:** The accreditation process is potentially important leverage in shaping a university's purposes and performance. What is the role for trustees in relation to that process?

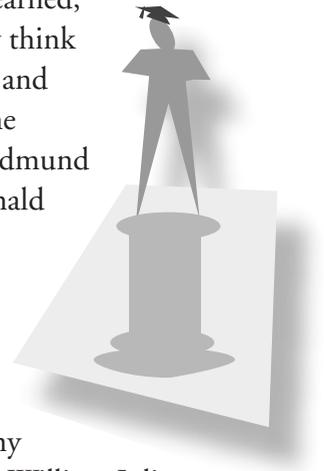
**Hubbard:** The accreditation process is a time for reflection and refocusing of a university's mission. The role of trustees is to ensure that the university's mission is consistent with the public interest. Therefore, the preparation and planning in connection with reaccreditation is a time for trustees to become better informed about their institutions, engage in the redefinition of the institution's mission, and collaborate with faculty and staff in a way to promote the whole institution.

**Brown:** Thanks so much for your time and thoughts about your work as a trustee.

# PUBLIC INTELLECTUALS AND THE INFLUENCE OF ECONOMICS

by Peter Levine

What is a public intellectual? This essay explores some reasons for the evident shortage of public intellectuals in America today. But first I must explain what I think “public intellectuals” are. Some people who use this phrase mean influential, learned, and articulate communities of *generalists*. They think nostalgically about Emerson, Thoreau, Alcott, and Hawthorne educating the nation from the same Concord neighborhood; or Hannah Arendt, Edmund Wilson, Mary McCarthy, and Dwight Macdonald trading essays in the *Partisan Review* — or Thomas Jefferson dining alone. Others reply that such luminous assemblages are still with us. For instance, certain professors associated with Harvard University’s Afro-American Studies Program (among them Kwame Anthony Appiah, Henry Lewis Gates, Cornel West, and William Julius Wilson) form a famous, influential, cohesive, interdisciplinary, and creative group of thinkers.



But this is not the only way to define a “public intellectual.” C. Wright Mills had something different in mind when he wrote that an intellectual’s job is “to help build and strengthen self-cultivating publics.”<sup>1</sup>

Mills was heavily influenced by John Dewey, who had claimed that the public’s “most urgent problem” was “to find and identify itself.”<sup>2</sup>

Dewey’s language was metaphorical and its literal implications remain obscure. But I assume that a public “finds itself” when most members of a community have a similar list of problems; when most individuals advocate feasible, coherent proposals; when everyone understands who the other stakeholders are and what views they hold; and when they have enough goals in common that they can take some constructive action together. When these criteria apply, a population has become a “public.” Dewey and Mills thought that making this happen was an intellectual’s

chief role.

Most publics are local. If we treat our population of 281 million as a potential public, then only a few people will actually have the opportunity to participate. It might be possible for these opinion leaders to represent the whole population fairly. But even then, most citizens would have no direct experience of deliberation or political action. They would have to choose our leaders, and they would tend to make poor choices simply out of inexperience. If you have participated in politics yourself, then you can tell the difference between a heated but principled discussion (on one hand) and an exchange of abuse (on the other). But if you have no such experience, then both dialogues look like screaming matches, and you cannot tell whom to select as a representative.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, even if we are mainly concerned about national issues, we should want as many people as possible to experience democracy firsthand in local politics. John Dewey wrote that the home of democracy is the “neighborly community.”<sup>4</sup>

Eminent generalists such as Jefferson, Emerson, Arendt, and Appiah can help to create and sustain local publics by injecting forceful new arguments into our debates. Their ideas reverberate in town halls, church basements, and kitchen-table conversations across the country. I suspect, however, that famous intellectuals are not the best friends of local “self-cultivating publics.” Authors who have national reputations mostly communicate with large audiences, but no group arrayed as an audience can deliberate. It is hard, when addressing the whole nation, to exemplify democratic habits of listening and learning, even if one’s instincts happen to be thoroughly democratic. Finally, thinkers who achieve fame normally write about issues of general interest, which means that they cannot know much about each particular community.

So what we need, if we seek “public intellectuals” in Mills’ sense, is not a revival of Monticello or the *Partisan Review*, nor even more illustrious faculties like the Afro-American Studies program at Harvard. Instead, we need intellectuals who contribute something distinctive to discussion and civic action in particular places or within specific organizations.

### **Barriers to Becoming a Public Intellectual**

There are such people, but not nearly as many as Dewey or Mills would hope. In the rest of this article, I will suggest several factors that keep contemporary academics and writers from “building and strengthening self-cultivating publics.” I will con-

centrate on cultural barriers, passing over some pressing practical problems (such as the fact that no one receives tenure for public engagement work). I would, however, note that tenured faculty are among society's freest and most secure employees, so it is largely their own fault if they do not become public intellectuals in Mills' sense.

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and difficult.*

The most obvious cultural barrier to public participation is hyperspecialization: an academic "deformation of the spirit" that is at least as old as the university itself. Plenty of scholarly work is unnecessarily narrow, arcane, and difficult. But I don't believe that we can achieve much by asking academics to use more interdisciplinary approaches or to tackle broader questions. Most of us cannot be simultaneously rigorous, original, and broad. If we give up rigor, then we cannot contribute anything distinctive as intellectuals. In public discussions, all kinds of errors and sloppiness go unchecked; serious scholars shouldn't add to this problem. We are sometimes advised to imitate the best journalists, who manage to report rigorously tested information in a broadly interesting way. But what journalists give up is originality: they normally report ideas that have appeared before in specialized publications. Unless you are a genius, you can only say something new about the far frontiers of your discipline. It is too much to ask that these novel ideas, facts, and interpretations also be widely interesting.

A second problem is that some topics are just not very relevant to the work of a Deweyan public. Consider a scholar of medieval church music. She might have something interesting to say to members of her community — but not anything germane to their political deliberations. In turn, she might learn something from *them* about liturgical music; but for the most part her time would be better spent in the library. Dewey and other democratic pragmatists have sometimes claimed that the only good intellectual work is work that serves democratic purposes.<sup>5</sup>

By that standard, research on medieval liturgical music doesn't sound justifiable. I admit that a study of Hildegard von Bingen, the twelfth-century abbess and composer, might tell us something relevant about the role of women in our communities. But that rationale would not justify research on male medieval composers. And even Hildegard seems unnecessarily remote if our real concerns are contemporary problems.

I think, however, that this pragmatic approach is far too single-mindedly political. Surely culture would be impoverished if

scholars could not study “impractical” topics for their own sake. And that means letting some of our academic colleagues *not* act as democratic citizens while they are on the job.

I am more concerned about those fields that directly relate to political issues and public opinion. Specialists in economics, ecology, engineering, law, education, public policy, and many other fields routinely offer advice to governments and citizens about public issues. They say, for instance, that if the community wants to build a bridge in one particular spot, it will cost \$10 million and it ought to be made of steel. Or they advise that building the bridge is illegal unless the Army Corps of Engineers consents. Or they claim that 60 percent of the population wants the bridge to be built. Or they argue that building a bridge is a bad idea because — notwithstanding its potential benefits for commuters — it will kill endangered snails.

It would require much more than a short article to examine all these forms of expert involvement, asking which is legitimate and useful and what dangers each holds for democratic deliberation. However, we do not normally describe experts as “public intellectuals” if they merely analyze means, costs, public opinion, and legal parameters. These are technical matters. A public intellectual is someone who also argues about ends and goals and attempts to *shape* public opinion and the law.

### **The Economist as Public Intellectual**

No one shapes public policy more widely and effectively than economists and those (in fields from law to education) who borrow economic techniques. Economists sometimes assert that their advice is thoroughly technical. They have nothing directly to say about what governments and publics ought to do; they can only predict what will happen if a particular policy is adopted. Such advice is indispensable in any reasonable public deliberation, but it cannot tell us who deserves what benefits, or which rights ought to be guaranteed, or what objects ought to be traded on a market, or whether change is preferable to stability, or what products are good (as well as desired), or how to weigh equity against freedom, or how much to value nature. Most economists recognize that these are normative questions about which reasonable people disagree and which economics cannot answer. Implicitly, they renounce the claim to be “public intellectuals.”

But others do draw normative conclusions from economic principles and techniques. As the law and economics professor

David D. Friedman says, “People are always asking economists whether one policy is better or worse than another. After answering ‘I am an economist, not a moral philosopher, what do I know about better or worse?’ the first 50 times, the economist eventually gives an answer along the lines of: ‘Here is a definition of better that is the best compromise I can manage between answering the question you are asking and answering a question I am competent to answer.’”<sup>6</sup>

Aware that they should not directly address what is “better or worse,” Friedman and other economists invoke the most minimal normative assumptions they can think of. They merely assume that people want whatever they choose to buy in the marketplace. Thus our actual purchases reveal what our preferences are. Furthermore, they assume that fulfilling preferences is good, since it makes us happy, satisfied, and/or free. “Giving the people what they want” also seems to be a democratic and antielitist principle.

Some societies satisfy as many individual preferences as possible and so achieve a kind of efficiency in the use of their resources; but most do not. Economists differ about the causes and remedies of such inefficiencies. Some emphasize failures of unregulated markets (e.g., monopolies, business cycles, the negative effects of voluntary contracts on third parties and nature). They tend to favor government intervention. But free competition in a market generally maximizes social welfare — at least according to a “fundamental theorem of welfare economics, which economists have been busy proving under different assumptions since the days of Adam Smith.”<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, most economists stress the many ways that state regulation undermines efficiency, concluding that a free market is better.

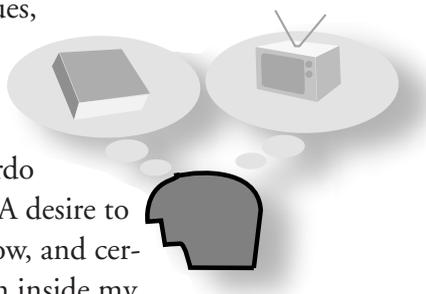
Such debates are conducted throughout our society. At the highest level, economists in the Federal Reserve manage the nation’s money supply with a minimum of political interference in order to mitigate the “market failure” of a recession. In more local contexts, people use economic arguments to assert the policies are right or wrong because they are socially efficient or inefficient. Meanwhile, the methodological assumptions of economics seep into popular discourse and turn normative. So “efficient” becomes synonymous with “good,” and growth of GDP becomes the main evidence of success. “Demand” turns into something that deserves to be satisfied, no matter what people happen to want. Labor ceas-

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es to be inherently valuable once it is seen as fungible with capital and raw materials. And paid work becomes infinitely more valuable than unpaid labor (even if this means paying each mother to take care of other parents' children).

Cornell Professor Scott Peters has told the story of a university expert who advised farmers that leasing land was equivalent to owning it — and would be preferable under specific economic conditions. One of the farmers replied, “Our parents did not come to America to become renters.” A sophisticated economist would back down and accept that economics does not tell people what is (and ought to be) the significance of each social role. But many experts who use economic methods are not aware of the discipline's limits.

Above all, the idea of efficient preference-satisfaction that is central to welfare economics ought not to influence public deliberations. As my colleague Mark Sagoff argues, market choices do not reveal what people's preferences are. Suppose that I spend \$20 on Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*. Does this show a preference for Smith over Ricardo or Marx? A preference for books over TV? A desire to impress the sales clerk? Even I may not know, and certainly sales data do not reveal what went on inside my head.



Besides, it is not obvious that we should seek to maximize the satisfaction of preferences, even if we can tell what they are. Some people want pornography and cocaine instead of love and music. Their chosen “goods” will not (or should not) make them happy. Nor is preference-satisfaction adequate evidence of freedom. I am not free because I can buy whatever I want at the shopping mall, if I have never even considered spending my time elsewhere: in church, with my kids, at a homeless shelter, in the forest, in a museum, or in a political campaign. Confronting me with arguments *against* my preferences might actually make me more free.

### **Public Intellectuals in Debates about Values**

The economist is the very model of the modern public intellectual. He or she manages to be influential and understandable, but does not help to “build and strengthen self-cultivating publics.” Citizens ought to consider arguments and reasons, not just market preferences; they should balance economic against

*Exceptional  
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noneconomic values. But what is the intellectual's role in this kind of deliberation?

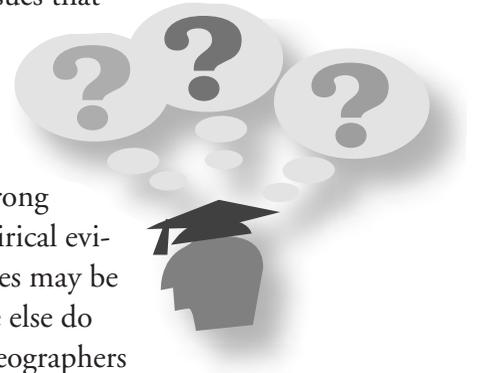
Expert participation presents moral dangers. Scholars with publications and degrees on their résumés may appear to have special authority and may acquire undue influence. They may even make other people feel unqualified to join in political discussions, which would be a highly undemocratic result. On the other hand, if there is any civic value in studying history, the social and natural sciences, literature, or philosophy, then intellectuals who are experts in these fields must have something special to offer. I think that they should participate, but without forgetting a few moral considerations.

First, exceptional knowledge does not entitle anyone to special political rights. Even if we could find brilliant people to govern us, they would still not understand our situations and problems as well as we do. Nor could they be trusted to act fairly as well as cleverly. So all citizens have the right to participate as equals in politics. (Note that if this argument is correct, then esteeming knowledge does not threaten political equality.)

Second, it is important not to claim a spurious link between one's professional expertise and one's moral views. Testifying before Congress about the looming impeachment of President Clinton, the Princeton professor Sean Wilentz repeatedly cited his expertise as a historian and the support of his professional colleagues. He told the House Judiciary Committee: "If you decide to do this, you will have done far more to subvert respect for the framers, for representative government and for the rule of law than any crime that has been alleged against President Clinton, and your reputations will be darkened for as long as there are Americans who can tell the difference between the rule of law and the rule of politics."<sup>8</sup> As a historian, Professor Wilentz could express a professional opinion about what the authors of the Constitution had originally intended by the impeachment clause. He was also entitled to his personal view of Clinton's case, which I happen to share. But no historian is capable of predicting future public opinion, as Wilentz professed to do. In any event, what was the relevance of his prediction? Even if most Americans continue to oppose the impeachment of President Clinton a hundred years from now, that doesn't prove that Congress made the wrong decision. The situation called for moral and legal judgment, and Wilentz was no more of an expert on these matters than anyone else.

The opposite mistake is to be so democratic and antielitist that one altogether refuses to participate in public deliberations, leaving that task to “real people” or “ordinary citizens.” When scholars claim that a particular policy is right or just, they risk looking arrogant. But intellectuals are citizens, too. To avoid participation because one holds an advanced degree is to dodge one’s civic responsibility. There is even an insidious kind of arrogance implicit in claiming that one is not “real” or “ordinary.”

Public debates unavoidably raise issues that are the subject of scholarly research. Citizens engaged in community discussions ask: “Has this idea been considered before?” That is a historical question to which there are right and wrong answers. They ask: “Will it work?” Empirical evidence from the natural and social sciences may be highly relevant. They ask: “Does anyone else do things this way?” Anthropologists and geographers may know. And they ask: “What should we do if we want to be moral, fair, or just?” Often, it is worth discussing analogous moral problems from works of literature, history, art, and philosophy — with guidance from professional scholars.



When intellectuals intervene as professionals, their job is to listen carefully to public discussions to glean what important questions they can address. They must then try to provide provisional information and advice that average citizens can understand. Intellectuals are also entitled to participate *not* as professionals but as citizens with personal opinions and interests, just like everyone else’s. But when they adopt that role, they must make sure not to claim or imply any special authority.

This advice is not especially difficult to follow, nor is it original. But it does imply that academics should devote more time and effort to community engagement. It also means that the point is not to gain a large audience, which can even be a distraction. True “public intellectuals” need not be nationally famous thinkers, but rather people who are engaged in local debates as citizens who happen to have special skills. Finally, would-be public intellectuals should not imitate their colleagues who use economic techniques to address questions of value. This is a powerful source of political influence, but its impact on public life is mostly dismal.

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# DEMOCRATIZING SCIENCE IN AN ERA OF EXPERT AND PRIVATE KNOWLEDGE

By William B. Lacy

In an information age, the way we generate, disseminate, and apply knowledge is at the center of power and core to the long-term survival of a democracy. Our society has long recognized the importance of knowledge and education. As early as the 1600s, well before the colonies declared their independence, institutions of higher education were established in the U.S. Initially, much of that education and knowledge was based in theology, philosophy, and the humanities. Over the last two centuries, however, science has become the dominant epistemology or way of knowing. Science, scientific knowledge, and its application through technology are critical influences on the empowerment of communities and sustainability of local democracy. Today, biotechnology, information technology, robotics, and bioinformatics are rapidly reshaping our daily lives and our communities, often in unexpected ways. Consciously or unconsciously, deliberately or inadvertently, paradigms for science and technologies are selected that influence how people work, travel, communicate, play, and live their lives over time. As a consequence, certain scientific and technological innovations are similar to legislative acts or major policy decisions, establishing a framework for public order that may endure over many generations. Indeed, science and technology are legislation. In a democracy, citizens generally would not tolerate sweeping legislative changes without due process. Ironically, however, scientists and their sponsors are able to cause wrenching social change through scientific findings and new technologies, that are often developed without public input and usurp fundamental democratic rights.

## **Expert and Private Knowledge**

Science has moved from the Cartesian model of the individual scientist as neutral observer carefully recording the processes of

nature to the Baconian model of the corporate scientist as an intervener changing natural processes by actively controlling them. The Baconian model is one of capital-intensive, organized, industrialized big science. Knowledge is divided by discipline and disciplines are further divided into narrower more specialized subdisciplines. In this model, highly educated experts and sophisticated equipment and technology generate knowledge. This orientation has changed the nature of scientific knowledge to knowledge-as-commodity, a marketable good with a cash value.

During the last 20 years, as new institutional arrangements, financial investments, and public and private research partnerships have evolved, significant changes have occurred in the way both universities and corporations conduct science and generate and commercialize knowledge. While U.S. universities and the federal government have been major players in science and technology, particularly since World War II, in recent years, private sector investments have been growing rapidly. By a substantial margin, the U.S. has the largest annual investment in science and technology, with its industrial research and development investment now more than double that of the federal government (estimated in 1999 at about \$166 billion compared to approximately \$70 billion from the federal government). Between 1994 and 1999, U.S. industrial research and development grew from slightly less than \$100 billion to \$166 billion, while federal research and development funds remained relatively stable.

Private sector research is generated in a context of secrecy and confidentiality, with an emphasis on intellectual property and proprietary products. The goal is to generate trade secrets, patents, and exclusive licensing for commercial gain. In contrast, university and federally funded research has usually been regarded as part of the public good and subject to a more democratic and open process. Priority setting and research review processes are more transparent and knowledge generated in this arena is generally made available through professional journals and university and government publications. In the land grant universities, which were founded as federal, state, and local government partnerships to generate and disseminate knowledge for the public good, advisory groups and cooperative extension have served as important mechanisms to democratize science.

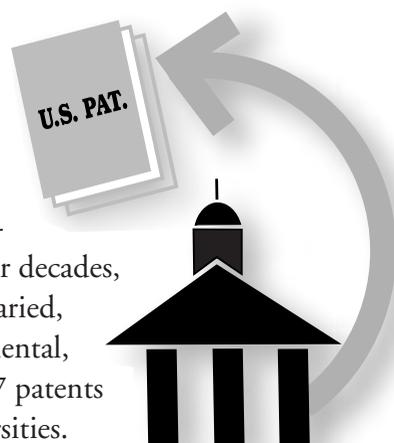
Recently, through a variety of scientific and legal developments both the federal government and the universities have

moved aggressively to commercialize and privatize knowledge. In the U.S., a series of landmark patent decisions, starting in 1980 with the U.S. Supreme Court decision *Diamond vs. Chahiabarty* (447 U.S. 303), provided complete patent protection for genetically engineered life forms from microorganisms to plants and animals. With their potential for rapid development of a spectrum of new proprietary products, the new biotechnologies have markedly increased corporate interest in patenting, particularly the creation of strong and internationally uniform patent laws to protect their investments.

At the same time, Congress passed several laws designed to bring more technology to the marketplace by encouraging research institutions, including public universities, to patent discoveries made in the course of government-sponsored research and to offer licenses to the private sector. The Bayh-Dole Act of 1980 enabled universities to patent inventions resulting from research that received federal support. Although federal support for university research has fallen since 1970, it still represents an estimated 60 percent of all university research and development funds.

At the same time, industry support for research and development at U.S. academic institutions has markedly increased. From 1980 to 1997, this industry support grew an estimated 8 percent annually in constant dollars, more rapidly than support from all other sources. As a consequence, industry support for university research has increased from 2.6 percent in 1970 to approximately 7.0 percent today, and constitutes over 15 percent at some large research universities.

As a result, U.S. universities have become major players in filing for patents, licensing their protected processes and inventions, and establishing new types of university-industry relationships. While university-industry relationships have existed for decades, these new relationships are generally more varied, wider in scope, more aggressive and experimental, and more publicly visible. In 1974, only 177 patents were awarded to the top 100 research universities. However, the annual rates have increased dramatically and by 1999, U.S. research universities were awarded 3,079 new U.S. patents and earned over \$640 million in royalties from



approximately 6,500 income-producing licenses. These universities also had formed 275 new start-up companies based on technologies they had developed and subsequently licensed to these new businesses. Finally, during the same period, U.S. universities have utilized industrial funds to create well over 1,000 new programs and centers that give participating private firms privileged access to university research and a role in shaping research agendas.

### **Citizen Knowledge**

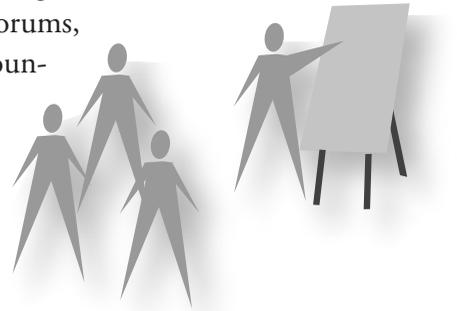
Within this context of expanding expert knowledge and rapid commercialization of science, it has become increasingly difficult for the general public to play a significant role in the generation and application of knowledge. Opposition to citizen involvement in the realm of science and technology is often based on the assumption that laypersons are incapable of grasping the highly sophisticated, technical nuances and methodological complexity of science. Recently, however, philosophers, sociologists, and political and community activists have challenged this view. These scholars have noted the inherently problematical, contingent, and negotiated character of scientific and technical research results. The products of science are contextually specific constructs that can only be understood with detailed knowledge of the social conditions of their production. These conditions include decisions about problem choice, what resources to allocate to the problem, how to conduct the research, what to consider as results, and how to interpret the findings. Human actors who interpret nature and function in social organizations make all these decisions. Within this view, science is seen primarily not as a way of representing and observing the world, but rather as a way (or ways) of manipulating and intervening in it.

Given this constructionist view of science and technology, one must ask “How can knowledge generation be democratized?” and “What are the appropriate roles for lay citizens in the realm of science and technology?” Sociologists of science recently concluded that the inability of lay persons to grasp the subtle content, difficult concepts, and methodological complexity of science is not a valid basis for a priori rejection of efforts to democratize science. In recent years, a wide array of mechanisms for involving citizens in science and technology decision making have emerged. These mechanisms can be distinguished across several dimensions. These

*Public hearings may also be used to effectively contain participation and restrict access.*

include the nature of the lay involvement, including the extent to which involvement includes activities commonly understood to be the exclusive realm of experts and who has authority for final decisions; the timing of the citizen entry into the process; the nature of expert involvement; the organizational dynamic of scientist and citizen interaction including who defines the terms of involvement; the extent to which participants view “technical” and “nontechnical” considerations as discrete; and the extent to which they view nontechnical matters as appropriate for consideration. At the least contentious end of the continuum, scientists acknowledge a social dimension to a problem and all participants agree that this is the appropriate realm of nonscientists, reserving technical questions for the experts. Near the other end of the spectrum, lay citizens challenge the rules of the scientific method, are involved in the production and evaluation of knowledge, and often assert that appropriate research methods must be shaped by nontechnical considerations.

The forms taken for democratizing science and science policy include public hearings and forums, advisory and oversight panels and councils, public surveys, consensus conferences, participatory action research, science shops, and community-based research. As one might imagine, the effectiveness of these mechanisms in involving citizens in the process varies



considerably. For example, public hearings may give citizens an opportunity to learn more about certain science and technology agendas, voice their opinions, participate in environmental and social impact analyses, and ultimately influence the direction of policy. However, public hearings may also be used to effectively contain participation and restrict access, while giving the appearance of community involvement.

One positive example is the public forum conducted by the National Agricultural Biotechnology Council that brings together diverse participants and stakeholders in the areas of agricultural biotechnology to discuss and clarify concerns surrounding these new technologies. While these annual forums raise many of the key issues, they have no specific role in deciding research agendas. Another mechanism is the science advisory committee, such as

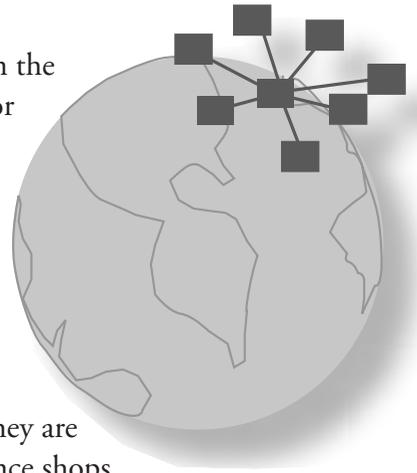
the Recombinant DNA Advisory Committee of the National Institutes of Health, that is charged with developing and coordinating the implementation of federal guidelines for this type of research. Although committee membership has broadened over time, scientists have continued to define the agenda with citizens having little real influence. European consensus conferences are often better models for dealing fairly with technical and social matters. In theory, consensus panels make lay people central to deliberations, and permit nonexperts to control the agenda.

All of these processes and procedures, however, have two fundamental problems. First, the outcome and recommendations are generally not binding and require the approval of the decision makers for their implementation. To partially overcome this limitation in Denmark, for example, consensus conferences were established in association with the parliament, so that outcomes and recommendations could be considered by decision-makers as quickly as possible. The second problem concerns the ability of key parties to manipulate outcomes. All of these processes risk being co-opted or overwhelmed by powerful interests, ultimately serving only to justify the decisions and plans of these interests. To avoid this pitfall, the goals and motives of the organizers, the credibility of spokespersons who both raise and discuss the range of issues surrounding the science, the funding sources for research, the process by which content, scope, and audience for science and technology are determined, and how this information and the outcomes of the conferences will be pursued, must be kept as transparent as possible.

Perhaps one of the most effective efforts to move away from scientist self-governance and empower citizens and communities in science has been the emergence of community-based research. This type of research involves lay people working with professionally trained scientists in a community-driven process and provides an opportunity for individual citizens to collaborate with professional researchers in defining a problem, conducting the research, interpreting results, and using the results to effect constructive social and environmental change.

Since the 1980s, community-based research has become a well-known and widely practiced research methodology and a powerful tool for social change globally. Moreover, in order to improve their work and share resources, practitioners have begun to collaborate through networks. The most developed network is

the national network of science shops in the Netherlands. The 38 shops, located at or near a Dutch university, conduct research on questions posed by citizen groups, trade unions, and public interest groups. Faculty, students, and staff work with citizens to help them address important social, environmental, and public health problems of concern to their community. Because they are networked with one another, these science shops are able to share information and make cross-referrals. They are currently responding to about 2,000 annual research requests and have inspired the creation of additional science shops in several other European countries.



The Loka Institute, a nonprofit research, education, and advocacy organization in Massachusetts, introduced this concept to the U.S. by creating the Community Research Network. This network is modeled partly on the Dutch research effort. A 1999 Loka study identified more than 100 U.S. community research centers around the country that deal with a variety of issues, from environmental health to campaign finance, and bring individual citizens from all walks of life to the research process.

One of the most visible community-based research efforts is “popular epidemiology.” In this process, lay persons gather scientific data and other information; make decisions about priorities; engage in hypothesis formation, research design and data analysis; and direct and marshal the knowledge and resources of experts to understand the epidemiology of disease. The Woburn, Massachusetts, case where citizens researched the relationship between local water and disease (e.g., leukemia) is often cited as an example of this process in action. Popular epidemiology differs from traditional epidemiology in its emphasis on social structural factors as part of the causative chain of the disease. Given the stakes for their communities, advocates of popular epidemiology would rather claim an association between variables when there is none, than to mistakenly overlook an association where there is one (something that could be harmful to the health of the community). Popular epidemiologists prefer false positives (or type one errors) to false negatives, while professional epidemiologists prefer type two errors to avoid concluding that something is real

when it is not (something that is potentially embarrassing and harmful to a scientist's reputation).

Other examples of community-based research have emerged across the country. For example, residents in the community-based West Harlem Environmental Action group formed a research partnership with scientists at Columbia University and health care providers at two medical centers to analyze community health problems and their relationship to environmental pollution. In Chicago, the Policy Research Action Group, a collaborative research partnership between 4 universities and 15 community-based organizations moved beyond the science shops and deeply involved communities in the research process itself. Since 1992, the group has supported more than 130 locally based research projects in health care, housing, refugee rights, jobs, and environment.

Clearly, community-based research — such as popular epidemiology and science shops — empowers communities, as it embraces both the knowledge and the values of the community and active participation. Community-based research differs from traditional research in several ways besides the participants. Research results are more likely to be useful and put into action. The research may be more accurate since it combines the knowledge of the scientists and the university with the knowledge of citizens and the community. Moreover, there may be greater acceptance of the conclusions given the community's direct participation in the process.

*Community-based research ...embraces both the knowledge and the values of the community....*

A number of barriers limit successful implementation of these strategies and subsequent democratization of science. Many of these barriers are embedded in the organization of our society. As a consequence, the real obstacles are such factors as widespread social and economic inequalities, the commercialization of knowledge, and an unexamined commitment to expert authority. Optimal citizen participation in science and technology depends on mechanisms that weaken the effects of socially significant forms of inequality, adequate time, and other resources to acquire the broadest possible knowledge base, and opportunity to examine deeply held assumptions. In addition, community-based research is time consuming for all involved, placing additional burdens on already overextended community leaders and activists as well as faculty and students. Finally, despite proven effectiveness, broad applicability, and growing popularity among scientists

in the U.S. and around the world, strategies such as science shops and community-based research remain conspicuously underfunded and undersupported by most governments and major research establishments.

In the future, the importance of science and technology in shaping the future of our communities and our society will only increase. While these are not the only factors impacting democracy, they are as important as any other and often the least understood. The democratization of science should be aggressively pursued, thereby ensuring that the agendas of science and technology are compatible with a sustainable democracy and serve the goals, values, and needs of communities.

# THE COMMUNITY'S SPACE: A STORY OF GULF COAST COMMUNITY COLLEGE

by Pamela Whitelock and Lynn Gager

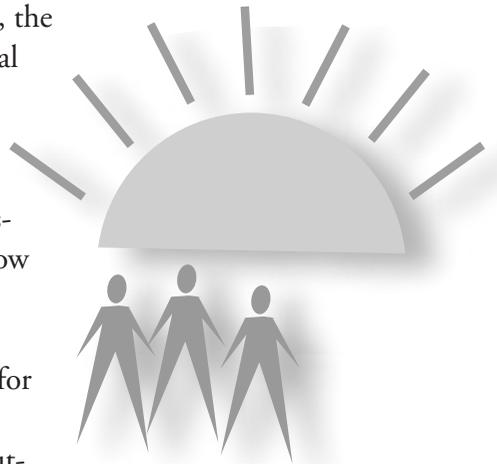
Across the country, neighborhoods and towns served by community colleges struggle with problems and opportunities related to growth management, environmental protection, work force training and competition in a global economy, worn and insufficient infrastructures, poverty, crime, illiteracy, etc. The list goes on and on. Gulf Coast Community College, and the communities it serves, is no exception. In this context of higher education — learning as the best resource for community renewal — not only do community colleges understand better than most the demands being placed on them, community colleges are well positioned to refine civic education to better equip citizens to solve problems and improve quality of life. With “space” being more function than place, some lessons learned by Gulf Coast as it evolves as “the community’s space” may offer answers appropriate for sister institutions struggling with similar concerns.

Gulf Coast’s story of its National Issues Forums (NIF) Public Policy Institute (PPI) embodies the institution’s undergirding comprehensive mission, a mission reflected in the college’s impetus for establishment in 1957. Becoming the first public two-year institution to open after the 1957 Florida legislature created a statewide network of community colleges, Gulf Coast was formed from a commitment to civic engagement long before it became fashionable in higher education circles. In fact, when the legislature demonstrated its intent to launch community colleges, Bay County citizens formed a caravan and drove to the state capital to demand one! The nature of the relationship — the “ownership” of the community college by its community — has been only enriched over the years and may serve as a model for others.

The story of Gulf Coast’s PPI also embodies the potential of citizen leaders, the cultivation of whom is among the PPI’s reasons for being. In many ways, the “founding father” of the Gulf Coast

Community College PPI was the late Senator George G. Tapper — Gulf Coast’s first, long-tenured, visionary chair of its District Board of Trustees, and the quintessential citizen leader. Serving three terms as a Florida representative and two as a senator, Tapper concentrated much of his efforts on improving educational opportunities in his home state. Senator Tapper once said, “The one commodity we all must have to be truly successful is self-respect. Every time we expect someone else to do something we could do for ourselves, just to make our lives easier, we lose an ounce of self-respect. Self-respect is a force powerful enough to chart a nation’s destiny.” This belief in both the capacity and responsibility of citizens to forge their own futures prompted Senator Tapper, in 1969, to conceive and endow a seminar/forum program that seeded an evolution in student, faculty, and community discourse and deliberation on substantive issues and the college’s earnest, pervasive, and enduring intent to build community. It is this deliberate positioning in public life that serves, as Gunder Myran, author of *Community College Leadership in the New Century*, recognized in 1969, as “the cutting edge through which the college penetrates into community life and through which the total program of the college becomes increasingly more relevant to community needs.”

Senator Tapper’s endowment laid the foundation for the PPI through annual sponsorship of a “Sun-up Seminar.” Often highlighted by public presentations by nationally renowned speakers and dignitaries, the seminars focused initially on critical national issues and engaged students in across-the-breakfast-table discussion with faculty and community leaders. Under the auspices of Continuing Education (now named “Lifelong Learning”), the Division of Social Sciences posed questions and served as facilitator for the informal, yet provocative, exchange. Based on the positive outcomes of this first initiative and the vision and unequivocal support of Gulf Coast presidents and boards, the college’s administrative team encouraged further civic involvement through participation in the Great Decisions and National Issues Forums programs.



*Civic education is more than philosophical principles, historical facts, and lessons learned from challenges to democracy.*

David Mathews, president of the Kettering Foundation and distinguished guest for one of those “Sun-up Seminars,” first commented on the uniqueness of Gulf Coast’s mission with its embedded concept of public scholarship. Certainly, programs of higher education have always included the preparation of students for responsible citizenship. However, Gulf Coast’s approach asserts that civic education is more than philosophical principles, historical facts, and lessons learned from challenges to democracy. It must — as Senator Tapper urged and exemplified — cultivate citizen leaders, those ordinary people voluntarily engaged in shaping the destiny of their institutions, neighborhoods, towns, states, nation, and the global village. In contemporary terms, Susanna Finnell, in a previous issue of this journal, marks this ultimate purpose of higher education as “creating citizens who practice knowing.”

Reflecting the early optimism regarding the PPI, the college soon learned that it had underestimated its positive impact. Its faculty modified the way they think about being professors — and the nature, context, and function of knowledge in society — and they embraced the overarching view of students as citizens and themselves as catalysts for and scholars and facilitators of civic engagement. Thus, the PPI became both stimulus and cornerstone for what was to become a year-round, comprehensive program in leadership, the Citizen Leadership Institute (CLI).

At about the time the PPI and its parent, the CLI, were emerging, citizens in Gulf Coast’s tri-county service district found themselves in conflict with each other, with elected officials, and with special interest groups on issues as diverse as the cost-effective utilization of a county incinerator; management of storm-water drainage; recruitment of new tourism markets; and the construction and maintenance of roads, traffic flow, and new bridges. Such conflicts were compounded by the community’s transient and multicultural populations. Though many citizens were disenchanted with existing structures and processes that seemed ineffective in meeting needs, it was unlikely that major changes would occur by spontaneous public action. Solutions demanded a new approach, new relationships, and new alignments of influence and power.

This is when the value of the PPI, and its focus on deliberation, was revealed. Previously viewed as foreign, incidents of intolerance-expressed-as-violence evidenced in the college’s own backyard as a high school senior was shot and killed near his cam-

*A high school senior was shot and killed near his campus during lunch break.*

pus during lunch break. The assailant and victim, one African-American and the other Hispanic, were popular and involved in sports and other school activities. The situation escalated with charges that racial conflict between the two prompted its tragic conclusion; the school and its community seemed destined for additional violence. Aware that its



PPI had cultivated within the high school's community many of the dispositions and skills that characterize citizen leaders, a CLI senior fellow orchestrated a grassroots effort to bring factions together to candidly address head-on the potentially explosive situation. The high school principal, a trained NIF moderator, formed a crisis resolution group that positioned the CLI senior fellow as forum organizer and lead moderator. Students from the school's communication/technology academy scripted and filmed a starter tape, and a group of 100 students assembled in the school cafeteria to participate in the forum "Students Under the Gun." All classrooms were connected to the forum through closed-circuit television and students brought comments from the classrooms to the forum floor to ensure that the voices of the 2,000-plus student community were heard. Though participants freely released emotions of sorrow, frustration, and anger, the volatile situation was diffused as key problems and potential solutions emerged through open discourse and deliberation. Subsequent forums extended participation to all stakeholders, and the collaborative problem-solving strategies included affixing responsibility and holding themselves accountable for specific actions. While serving later as the elected superintendent of schools, the former principal regularly drew from this experience, insisting on forums as instructional responses to the schools' civic challenges. He used forums as problem-centered learning experiences involving a process that results in measurable outcomes.

Since the CLI's strategies and tools are timeless and infinitely applicable, and its goal is to "help people help themselves," the work of the CLI readily adapts itself to an entire county's approach to growth-management decision making. This is evidenced in the following story. The area served by the college found itself wedged between conservation of "the world's most beautiful beaches" and unparalleled growth fueled by national migration patterns coupled

with the conversion of hundreds of thousands of acres of forested lands to real estate development. Stakes ran high, as did tensions, even to the extent of physical altercations. Local newspapers headlined combative exchanges between citizens with vested interests and growth-management policymakers; letters-to-the-editor pleaded for common sense and attention to the common good. People agreed that most everyone wanted the best of both worlds, and the old ways of talking weren't getting them there. It was at that point that the CLI was asked to conduct a series of land development regulations workshops to engage citizens in voicing concerns; expressing their visions for the future; posing solution options; identifying advantages and drawbacks; acknowledging consequences and trade-offs; and reaching common ground for direction. Participants expressed skepticism at first, but grew to appreciate that complex and controversial issues require informed consideration based on all the facts. With agreement reached on the majority of issues, participants came to value smart planning as time consuming, yet possible, and recognize that the best decisions come from citizens willing to actively engage with one another in public work. Influenced by context and history, the deliberative model employed functioned inductively. The process was grounded in trust and moved participants from first reactions to greater personal mastery and expertise. It balanced structured learning with self-generated learning and enhanced interpersonal effectiveness as well as resource-utilization practices. Based in deliberation and the creation of a public, it entailed both conflict and consensus and demanded the relentless, precise execution of new paradigms for problem solving. It avoided arbitrary, purposeless, or destructive change and, most distinctively, it propelled individuals to action. A vocal spokesperson for the developers, disappointed that consensus wasn't achieved at the final forum, contacted a vocal spokesperson for the environmentalists to extend an invitation to meet further to attempt to reach a compromise.

*The best decisions come from citizens willing to actively engage with one another in public work.*

Evaluation data strongly support claims that a new form of civic education results from enhancing citizen participation skills. The Citizen Learning Institute serves as a change agent and its PPI and other learning experiences as instruments to cultivate citizen leaders and to effect transformation in a community's approach to public decision making, revitalizing and rendering it simultaneously more productive and more democratic. Old net-

works have been strengthened and new ones created; community resources have been mobilized and directed more effectively; and new partnerships have been forged to enhance the capacity of citizens to pro-actively, practically, inclusively, and collaboratively chart their own future.

Gulf Coast Community College believes that this is what being a “community” college is all about, and that its comprehensive mission, with the inclusion of public scholarship, is more necessary to society than ever before.

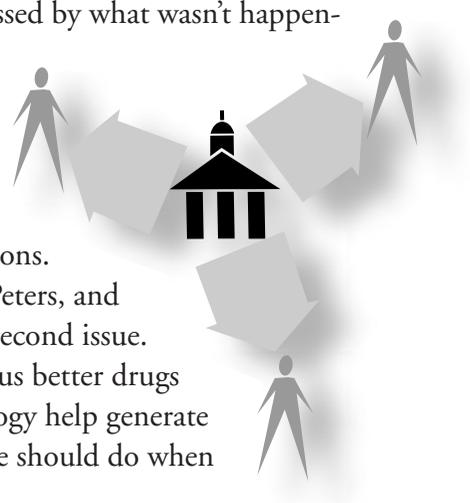
# AFTERWORD

By David Mathews

We promised that the *Exchange* would begin a new series of articles dealing with three interrelated topics. The first would be where institutions of higher education “stand” or place themselves in public life, how they understand their civic mission (or better still, their civic identity). Second, we said we would look at higher education as a place of scholarship, at the faculty and the disciplines, with particular attention to the role scholars play in public life or the relationship of expert knowledge to the practical wisdom that drives political decisions. Finally, the *Exchange* pledged to offer articles about institutions that are experimenting with repositioning themselves in public life or about scholars who are involved in the production of practical wisdom. All three deal with one common question: What kind of citizens are universities and colleges?

Two articles, one by a member of a medical school faculty and one by a university trustee, present contrasting pictures of where institutions stand. John Wheat and William Hubbard have different but complementary notions of what higher education owes the public. As a trustee, William Hubbard believes a university should be active in listening to the citizenry, identifying issues, and promoting a dialogue. John Wheat is living out that vision. Finding himself in a situation where a preoccupation with internal agendas closed down podiums for doing the things William Hubbard prizes, and personally distressed by what wasn't happening in his state, John Wheat has created a new space for himself and like-minded colleagues. He has done it by establishing a civic association outside of academe and by fashioning alliances with faculty at other institutions.

Articles by William Lacy, Scott Peters, and Peter Levine provide a trilogy on the second issue. Can the scholarship that has brought us better drugs and miracle-working medical technology help generate the wisdom we need to tell us what we should do when



faced with threats like drug abuse or the rising cost of good health care? That's quite a challenge. Scholarship produces knowledge of how the world works. Wisdom, on the other hand, tells us how we should live in the world. (I like the metaphor of a hot stove to explain the difference. Knowledge is "the stove is hot." Wisdom is "don't touch it.")

The three articles offer different approaches to dealing with this issue. One is to open up the production of knowledge by encouraging citizens to collect and analyze scientific data. Citizens have to deal with "should" questions, so involving them in scholarly work might close the gap between knowledge and wisdom. But can we be sure the knowledge people generate is as reliable as that produced by disciplined scholars? Professional rigor, Peter Levine points out, defines academic scholarship. William Lacy proposes a novel remedy: have citizens enter the scene before data collection, at the point when problems are being defined. He would also broaden the scope of knowledge to include subjects where citizens are competent.

Scott Peters looks at another possibility, one that he and Harry Boyte think has enormous potential. They encourage scholars to contribute to "public work," to the coproduction of things that have public value. Scott also argues that one of the things scholars can do to begin this work is to bring people together; they have convening power. But what is the nature of the work? The production of knowledge is primarily cerebral; it goes on inside our heads. Work, on the other hand, is muscular and often sweaty. What does that suggest for scholars? Perhaps the work Scott Peters has in mind is the work of producing practical wisdom, which is deciding what sort of life people wanted to characterize the central institutions of public life — communities. This kind of work is essentially normative. It all has to do with deciding what *should* be.

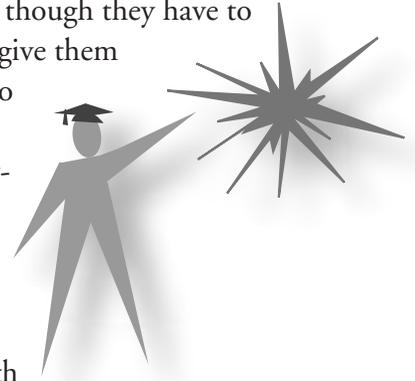
This is where Peter Levine rejoins the discussion. How does the scholar, a person defined by a rigorous intellectual discipline, enter into the primary work of a democratic citizenry, which is to know itself by choosing the ends and means of public life? One of the challenges to entering public deliberations is that citizens don't deal with questions of ends and means the way scholars do. And, as John Wheat's friend reminded him, citizens have to live out the consequences of their decisions, which are in actions, not in the refinement of ideas.

Another challenge is that scholars' expert knowledge doesn't

necessarily make for better political decisions that are inherently normative. Knowing *what is* is important in decision making, but we can't deduce *what should be* from it. That requires wisdom, not just knowledge. Peter Levine argues that scholars can't be excused from speaking to *should* questions, though they have to recognize that descriptive expertise doesn't give them a privileged position in the deliberations. So far so good.

But do scholars just go around supplying knowledge where it is needed? Pointing out where the hot stoves are is certainly valuable. Yet isn't there more to do? I always liked Kant's suggestion that scholars should do their thinking aloud with other citizens. Yet it isn't clear what that means; I certainly don't think it can be taken literally. The problem is one I mentioned earlier; public thinking isn't like professional thinking. I would like to hear someone expand on *if* and *where* they intersect. (Peter Levine does some of this by exempting certain disciplines.) A community deciding if it is fair to allocate its resources in a particular way isn't like a group of scholars discussing the nature of justice. I hope future *Exchanges* will continue to take us farther along this path. William Lacy, Scott Peters, and Peter Levine cleared away a lot of underbrush.

The *Exchange* meets its third obligation with an article describing what Gulf Coast Community College is doing in what I would call creating "public-making space" in contrast to providing services and expert knowledge. This college stands inside the major issues facing its community, such as whether to build a new bridge in a fragile coastal environment. The institution isn't a partisan with an answer, nor is it merely a facilitator. Gulf Coast creates a space for citizens to make decisions by giving an example of a way of talking and reasoning (deliberation) that is designed for dealing with normative matters. (For example, should the bridge be built?) Deliberation, carefully weighing the options against all that is deeply important, creates a space wherever people are talking about the bridge. It is more than a physical place. The college brings people together not in the sense of convening them (they have already convened themselves in coffee shops and over water coolers and kitchen tables) but in the sense of using deliberation to join people of different opinions in a shared moral



*Deliberation is public space.*

struggle. Deliberation is public space.

The college enters the dialogue by participating in structuring the deliberation. That begins before the forums, in listening to people name the problem. Is building the bridge about convenience (about traffic jams), economic development, protecting a way of life, or something else that is extremely valuable?

Once the problem is named in terms that capture what is important to people, Gulf Coast participates in the next task, which is identifying the conflicts that inevitably arise when we consider more than one thing valuable. The faculty, both as citizens and as academics, participate in laying out the options. And after the deliberations have gone on long enough for a public voice to emerge that can describe what people will and won't do to solve whatever problem they are addressing, the college participates in analyzing the outcomes and seeing that they are broadcast. (Since city and county officials are typically in the forums, the citizenry doesn't "report to them," but they get a sense of the public from their own participation.)

No single *Exchange* can speak to all of the subtopics in its three major themes, and I hope that in the future we can get to one touched on briefly in last year's issue, which was the understanding of democracy implied in the various options for revitalizing the civic identity of higher education. For instance, Gulf Coast Community College makes a statement about what democracy is in the way it relates to questions like whether to build a bridge. And that statement, that behavior, is probably more important than anything written in the catalogue about how the college contributes to self-government. As Harry Boyte has pointed out, none of these definitions is necessarily right or wrong. Yet, they are very important in the great challenge of deciding what kind of democracy we want in the future. Stay tuned.

# CONTRIBUTORS

David Brown is coeditor of the *Higher Education Exchange* and a professor of professional practice at the New School's Milano Graduate School of Management and Urban Policy. Deborah Witte is a program officer at the Kettering Foundation.

Lynn Gager is coordinator of public and community services at Gulf Coast Community College. She has served as PPI director for eight years. Lynn coordinates the activities of the Citizen Leadership Institute at GCCC and presently serves as president of the Florida Community College Pollution Prevention Consortium. In 1997, she was recognized by The Nature Conservancy as The Grassroots Leader in Florida.

William C. Hubbard, a graduate of the University of South Carolina, was elected to the USC Board of Trustees in 1986 and served as chairman from 1996-2000. He is now chairman emeritus and a member of the board's executive committee. Mr. Hubbard also served the state of South Carolina as chair of the Task Force on Women in State Government and as chair of the Committee on Two-Year Education for the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education.

William B. Lacy is vice provost-University Outreach and International Programs and professor of Sociology in the Department of Human & Community Development at the University of California-Davis. He has authored/coauthored more than 60 journal articles and book chapters and 6 books on education, science policy, agricultural research and extension, and biotechnology and biodiversity.

Peter Levine is a research scholar at the University of Maryland's Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy, an associate of the Kettering Foundation, and the author of four books: most recently, *The New Progressive Era: Toward a Fair and Deliberative Democracy* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

David Mathews, who is 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. He has written extensively on such subjects as education, political theory, southern history, public policy, and international problem solving. His most recent books are *Is There a Public for Public Schools?* (Kettering Foundation Press, 1996) and a revised edition of *Politics for People* (University of Illinois Press, 1994).

Scott Peters is an assistant professor in the Department of Education at Cornell University. His teaching and Extension work focus on civic renewal, community education and development, youth development, and public issues education. He is currently at work on three books: a history of the founding and early development of the cooperative extension system, a Liberty Hyde Bailey Reader, and a practical theory of public scholarship in land grant education drawn from an analysis of contemporary case studies.

Nancy L. Thomas, J.D., Ed.D., directs the project, Models for Democracy: Strengthening Higher Education for Civic Responsibility and Social Justice, for the Society for Values in Higher Education. This project explores the link between higher education's mission and practices and core values of integrity, diversity, social justice, and civic responsibility. She teaches Legal Issues in Higher Education at the University of Massachusetts-Boston and is a senior associate at the New England Resource Center for Higher Education (NERCHE).

John R. Wheat is professor of Community and Rural Medicine in the College of Community Health Sciences at The University of Alabama. He is active in several local and national medical societies, is a past-chairman of the North American Agromedicine Consortium and is a bureau member of the International Association of Agricultural Medicine and Rural Health. His academic interests revolve around vulnerable and underserved rural populations.

Pamela Whitelock is dean of lifelong learning at Gulf Coast Community College. She is the author of a million-dollar-plus W.K. Kellogg Foundation grant project to establish GCCC's Citizen Leadership Institute, which has won numerous national and state awards. A frequent presenter at conferences, she recently was published in the April/May 2000 *Community College Journal*.

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Foundation*

200 Commons Road, Dayton, Ohio 45459-2799 (937) 434-7300; (800) 221-3657  
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 [www.kettering.org](http://www.kettering.org)