



HIGHER EDUCATION EXCHANGE



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

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

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

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FOREWORD

By Deborah Witte

We're celebrating! This issue of the *Higher Education Exchange* marks the tenth anniversary of the journal. I vividly remember when I turned ten; the magic of being “double digits” was not lost on me. I am the youngest of six sisters, so my achieving that goal of a decade of life was not quite the milestone in the family history, perhaps, as it had been for my older sisters. But I knew it marked a kind of coming of age. It meant a certain maturity I had been unable to claim until then. And so it is with this milestone in the life of *HEX*. (I know it should read *HEE*, but my coeditor vehemently objects to that acronym and he's such a valuable partner in this adventure, that I acquiesce.)

Over this decade, the theme of public scholarship has emerged as the journal's calling card. In each issue, we've featured essays from faculty who are experimenting with a different way of relating to the community — both the university community and the community of citizens beyond the campus. We've featured a few articles, far fewer than we would like, from students who have been caught up in the excitement (and disappointment) of what it means to be a public scholar. We've been pleasantly surprised by the numerous examples of universities who have created partnerships with community organizations to practice public scholarship. Today, we would call them “engaged universities,” a term that wasn't in vogue when we began this venture. I'd like to think we had a hand in that term, and its attending practice, becoming more commonplace.

And so we pause, but just for a moment, to pat ourselves, and you our readers and contributors, on the back. It's been wonderful to be a part of a burgeoning movement of scholars, administrators, faculty, and students who truly believe in a public form of knowledge and scholarship that will build a more invigorated public life for all of us. It makes sense to reflect on this milestone and try to tease out what these past ten years of the journal have meant.

It is precisely this “sense-making” of the last ten years’ work that is the theme of my coeditor David Brown’s essay that opens this issue. He begins his article, “Talking the Walk’: Making Sense of *HEX* (1994-2004),” with the historical recovery of the public dimensions of higher education and reminds us of the contributions Claire Snyder and others have made that underlie the case for public scholarship. He teases out the many and varied articles that addressed higher education as an economic engine and discussed the roles that government and corporations have played. He addresses the “democratic models” that form the core of new thinking about higher education — public scholarship, public-making, and movement sensibilities. Brown reminds us of the differences of opinion that have emerged around the idea of public scholarship. He reminds us of the essays that illuminated the practical work of scholar-practitioners like Scott Peters and Harry Boyte. He tries his predictive skills on where these “parts we see today” may lead us. He suggests a movement is afoot, a movement that is still developing.

The remaining pieces adhere to our tested and true formula of presenting interviews, essays, book reviews, and articles from scholars, practitioners, faculty, and students who share a commitment to exploring public scholarship.

In the next article, “What Is “Public” About What Academics Do?” David Brown engages Robert Kingston and Peter Levine in a dialogue. Longtime colleagues, Kingston and Levine share a commitment to, and an interest in, reinventing civic life. Each begins the interview by trying their hand at defining the term public scholar — Levine prefers the term public intellectual — and this sets the stage for a lively exchange that ranges from the themes of expert knowledge to pedagogy to community-based research. They engage arguments about the role of the public scholar in public dialogue as well as the work of a public scholar. They discuss the obligation of a public scholar to serve a democratic society and the role of an engaged institution as an agent of public-making. They both share the concern that “citizens generally don’t want to get involved,” and work toward increasing citizen participation, each in his own way.

David Cooper, in “Education for Democracy: A Conversation in Two Keys,” shares his students’ reactions to *The New Student Politics* and his reflections on their reactions. By juxtaposing his students’ work in public interest research and public

literacy projects — a classic lobbying campaign — with the “self-drawn portrait of a generation deeply committed to political life through nontraditional practices of civic engagement,” Cooper expected a spark-plug effect. He received, at best, a lukewarm reception. By reflecting on his own expectations as a professor, Cooper uncovers important questions about pedagogy, politics, and practice. He suggests that a new challenge of epistemology lies at the heart of a “widening gap between the ways in which students learn best and the ways in which faculty teach.” The reader is left with more questions than answers, but then, isn’t that the nature of inquiry?

Noëlle McAfee wears many hats. She is a professor, an associate editor, a philosopher, and a researcher. This variety of experiences and perspectives makes for an engaging, wide-ranging, yet tightly coherent interview with David Brown. In “Getting the Public’s Intelligence” McAfee explores rationality and reasoning, “the transmission of affect,” public deliberation, John Dewey, higher education and public life, deliberative public opinion polling, and democracy. Long an observer of deliberative forums on political and community issues, McAfee continues to seek an articulation of democratic practice through an understanding of public ideas and public deliberation.

In every issue, we feature a story of an ongoing university-community partnership. “Bringing Democracy to Health Care,” written by Douglas Scutchfield, Carol Ireson, and Laura Hall, is such a story. The University of Kentucky’s Center for Health Services Management and Research (CHSMR) and the Green River district of Kentucky collaborated in holding a series of deliberative town hall meetings on issues of health care. Through these deliberations, the CHSMR and other community organizations and citizens were able to publish a directory of health providers and obtain federal funds for building a primary care health clinic. They also formed the Citizens Health Care Advocates, a citizens’ group committed to “maintaining community dialogue, deliberations by citizens, and assuring a community voice on health-related decisions by the community.” The authors suggest that while this project has improved health care in the community, a perhaps more important outcome has been the development of the community’s ability to solve its own problems by the development of the community’s “public voice.”

In the next article, Douglas Challenger, in an interview

with David Brown, reflects on his experiences as founding director of the New England Center for Civic Life. Having recently returned to full-time teaching at Franklin Pierce College in New Hampshire, Challenger shares what he learned trying to bring a theory of public scholarship together with its practice. A not altogether bright and sunny picture, he honestly and openly shares the difficulties inherent in experimenting with professional academic roles. Bottom-line concerns, as well as the small politics of any organization, even a university, can be sources of tension that often cannot be overcome for any variety of reasons. Nonetheless, Challenger remains committed to the promise of public scholarship.

Kelvin Lawrence, in his piece, reviews Robert Putnam and Lewis Feldstein's book, *Better Together*. Putnam showcases 12 examples of capital-building initiatives, examples that stand as exceptions to the civic decline that was the focus of Putnam's earlier volume, *Bowling Alone*. Lawrence teases out a few common elements that characterize the organizations and programs that Putnam highlights, among them the use of social networks, the importance of storytelling, and the role of governmental or nonprofit actors in the success of the programs.

David Mathews, in his "Afterword," suggests a couple of avenues for continued research in the area of public scholarship. Some of the themes we have seen before: the civic mission of the university; the problem of increasing marketization of the university; the production of knowledge — both by solitary scholars and by scholars in concert with the public; students and service-learning, and students and leadership. In addition, Mathews lays out a few new avenues for exploration. He is concerned that we aren't having conversations about what kind of democracy we want, or what we mean by our individual and collective definitions of the "public," or how we define the "good" in "public goods."

Mathews asks the big questions, the questions that will define our times, the answers to which will determine our success in this venture. Let us begin, then, to face these big questions, to suggest other questions, to struggle with the meaning of our common work. I hope that, in another ten years, we will be able to revisit our progress and again make meaning of where we have been. And chart the way we will go next. I hope you will join us for what promises to be another decade of fruitful adventure.

“TALKING THE WALK”: MAKING SENSE OF *HEX* (1994-2004)

By David Brown

Editors' note: We are grateful to all of the contributors to HEX. It was not possible, however, for the purposes of this piece, to reference everyone's contribution. Back copies of HEX are available by contacting Rita Shanesy, circulation coordinator for HEX at the Kettering Foundation (rshanesy@kettering.org). All references, unless otherwise noted, are from HEX.

Sense Making

If you go to the Kettering Foundation Web site, it tells you that the *Higher Education Exchange* (“*HEX*”) is an annual foundation publication that frames the major issues coming out of its public-academy projects, and is part of a movement to strengthen higher education's democratic mission and foster a more democratic culture throughout American society.

HEX got started with its first issue in 1994 in what we called a “nascent conversation” of educators who could learn from each other. Since that beginning, we thought of this exchange as a form of “open source development” with obviously no one having the proprietary software code that could possibly run the “higher education system,” much less explain it adequately. We thought everyone, however, should have access and opportunities to improve what they find — much like what good teaching and research are about, or a healthy democracy for that matter, which is Kettering's central concern.

Each year, we encourage *HEX* contributors to “think out loud,” not in the manner of an academic piece seeking peer approval, but through sharing their stories as they make sense of what they've done and what it means. It was Noëlle McAfee who reminded me in our interview in this year's *HEX* that storytelling moves people away from making “declarations” and, instead, grounds their views in their own experience. Each year as well, Deborah Witte, my coeditor, has added her own sense-making

remarks in a “Foreword” and David Mathews, Kettering’s president, has provided an “Afterword” making his own contributions and reporting on related Kettering collaborations and projects.

So after more than a decade of such exchange, it seemed like a good time to engage in what we called a “sense-making” exercise. We asked friends and associates, as David Mathews put it, “to make sense — the common thread — in what we have found in higher education.” Karl Weick, the social psychologist, calls this “talking the walk,” or to paraphrase Weick, “How can we know what we think until we see what we’ve said?”

In some respects, making sense of the more than 100 contributions to *HEX* means trying to make sense of the higher education enterprise in America — an exercise that is necessarily reductive, but, as I told a colleague recently, avoids being totally incoherent.

Jay Rosen once told me in an interview that journalists were ahead of him in figuring out what “public journalism” was but often he was ahead of them in figuring out how to talk about it. So, with the help of Kettering friends and associates who were part of the sense-making exercise, let me get a step ahead and talk the walk that *HEX* has journeyed since 1994.

The “Historical Recovery” of the Civic Roots of Higher Education

It makes sense to start with the contributions in *HEX* that John Dedrick at Kettering aptly called the “historical recovery” of the public dimensions of scholarship and the role of colleges and universities in the work of democracy. Without that historical recovery, it is more difficult to make the case that scholars and their institutions should now become more involved in such work.

In the 1998 issue, Claire Snyder told of the role of the classical curriculum of the colonial colleges in preparing those who would “tend to public affairs.” Such colleges “served their particular communities by producing public leaders,” and the colleges became even more publicly engaged at the time of the American Revolution preparing students for their democratic responsibilities. As Snyder put it, “the liberal arts were becoming the civic arts.” Although Jefferson’s “secular dream” of the public university, preparing a larger cohort for democratic life, was largely deferred during much of the nineteenth century, nonethe-

less, local denominational institutions, including the first black colleges, continued to promote the civic arts.

As the modern university and graduate education emerged toward the end of that century, Snyder pointed out, the university's "early concern with using knowledge for social reform soon came to conflict with the ideal of objectivity," and the disengagement from public life was under way. Furthermore, as higher education opened its doors wider to those seeking entry, "the curriculum began to focus less and less on nurturing civic capacities and more and more on serving the professional and vocational interests of individual students." As new social science disciplines formed and advocacy was repressed in some institutions, Snyder told us in a subsequent 2000 piece that it was mostly female scholars denied employment in higher education who continued to "address public problems directly," a subject she will examine in more detail in next year's *HEX* when she discusses the civic import of those women's research agendas.

In *HEX* 1997, Scott Peters unearthed for our readers the largely forgotten roots of America's land grant colleges and universities, authorized by the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890, and their "active partnership" with rural publics, which was enlarged by the national Cooperative Extension System in 1914. Such a partnership was not conceived as merely a form of technical assistance and Scott breathed new life into the writings of Liberty Hyde Bailey, a public-spirited scientist, who advocated that —

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 (p.52).

As part of the story, however, Scott told how the land grant institutions moved away from "the old idea that farming was a 'way of life' [that] carried with it civic overtones" to farming as a "business" that "stripped away" its "civic meaning." Consequently, in *HEX* 2001, he posed the question: Through what kinds of work is the original land grant mission being currently renewed and pursued? With the support of Kettering, Peters assembled a team of colleagues using an action research approach to identify natural scientists, among others, and their current civic practices in order to "build a practical theory of public scholarship in land grant education" (*HEX* 2003, p.60).

The Prevailing “Economic Model” in Higher Education

Notwithstanding the civic roots of higher education, many institutions have become increasingly comfortable with seeing their primary role as the preeminent research and professional sources for the nation’s continued economic growth and prosperity. It has been a role enlarged and supported by the federal government and, more recently, private corporate partnerships. This development, like a swollen river, has carried these institutions far from their civic moorings and been a topic of considerable discussion in the pages of *HEX*.

In *HEX* 1998, Mary Stanley discussed the unintended consequences for academics and students alike if “market values ... finally do swamp “democratic values.”

We have created the conditions of an increasingly “free” labor that by virtue of its individualism, precariousness, and isolation seems incapable of creating community, collective resistance, or even perhaps public life (p.34).

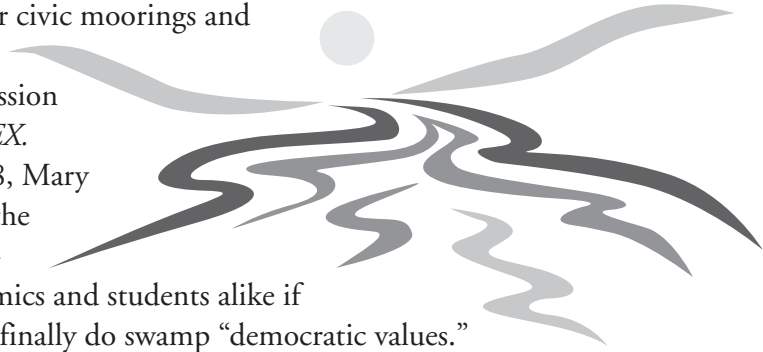
That same year, at a Kettering Seminar on the Professions and Public Life, William Sullivan similarly warned that —

Today’s discourse about education ... is described primarily as a vehicle for individual advance. But there is something called common goods, or public goods, that are worth achieving, too, because without them our particular goods are not stable or secure.

Two years later, Stanley pointed out the extent to which the prevailing economic model has altered —

The language and practice of higher education as an institution [that] has acquiesced to an image of ... a sovereignty of the individual as consumer/worker/investor, not necessarily as democratic citizen (*HEX* 2000, p.36).

In *HEX* 2001, William Lacy reminded us that “private sector research is generated in a context of secrecy and confidentiality” and “both the federal government and the universities have



moved aggressively to commercialize and privatize knowledge” (pp.53-54), and last year in an interview Peter Levine took special note of the Bayh-Dole Act that allows “universities to sell or license patents that were developed in their laboratories using federal funds.” With such a “multibillion source of revenue,” Peter asked,

Why develop a solution to a local agricultural problem in partnership with neighboring farmers if a college lab can bring in thousands of times more money by developing a product for a global market? (*HEX* 2003, pp. 37-38)

In the same issue, Scott Peters reported on the “pressures” in land grant institutions “to move farther and farther down a path of private support ...” and, “as connections with corporations grow closer, the distance between the campus and the community seems to be growing more and more distant” (*HEX* p.57).

The prevailing economic model has also been the driving force behind community-university partnerships. The graduate school where I teach recently hosted a roundtable discussion about the subject, and I was struck by how many participants took for granted that a university’s most important community role was to share its resources and expertise in furthering economic development.

It is also a familiar story by now of how colleges and universities have borrowed the language of “markets” and “consumers” to describe their recruitment of students. The hustle seems to have gone to new lengths with the offering of student “perks” like massages, water slides, golf simulators, pubs, nightclubs, and a Jacuzzi, if you can imagine, that holds 53 people. The pursuit is not just of students. Year in and year out an academic star system promotes ceaseless competition for academic luminaries who can attract more dollars and raise the rankings of the “winners” — “star wars” that are symptomatic of a market test that values a university mission to broker professional employment and advancement — period!

Michael Oakeshott, however, once noted that “A university is not a machine for achieving a particular purpose or producing a particular result; it is a manner of human activity.” And much of that activity, like democracy itself, is a never-ending conversation about human ends, not just the human means assumed in the economic model. David Mathews asked early on,

Is there something that the academy has to offer other than what it knows, something that gives a public a greater capacity to act together? (*HEX* 1995, p.69)

David reasoned that good teaching and research involves thinking about ends and means, and that “the ways of knowing” cultivated in the academy are not that different from what a public needs. The historical recovery of the civic roots in higher education was the place to start in *HEX* and parallel discussions addressing Mathews’ question evolved around “public scholarship,” “public-making,” “public space,” “public knowledge,” and “public work.” There was no orderly progression to these discussions but I offer a tentative sequence here for the purpose of sense making.

The Possibilities for a “Democratic Model” in Higher Education

“Public Scholarship”

Originally, it was Jay Rosen’s work in the “public journalism” movement that helped shape the discussion about “public scholarship” and “public scholars” in *HEX*. Rosen, a professor at NYU, made a crucial distinction that had been often overlooked —

To pursue a public identity as a scholar is not simply to apply advanced knowledge to social problems, or to translate scholarship for a lay audience. The point is to produce a kind of knowledge that can be had in no other way. Intellect alive in public life is itself a form of inquiry (*HEX* 1995, p.52).

In 1996, I pursued the topic with Jay in an interview. Jay had come to realize in doing his public journalism work that, unlike accomplished scholars who share what they already know in various venues, he could only develop the idea of public journalism through a “process of inquiry” conducted with others in public. For Rosen, public scholarship was a process not a product.

As soon as I decide that I *know what* “public journalism” is, and go about recruiting others to my definition, I’ve crossed over into another line of work. The work may be worth doing — at times it may be imperative — but it is not public scholarship as I’m using the term (*HEX* 1996, p.33).

William Sullivan in the same issue also saw the need for a new kind of expertise which was “civic” rather than “technical.”

This kind of expert contributes to the civic purpose not by circumventing the public through the imposition of technical devices, but by engaging with broader publics. Attempting to make sense of what is happening, analyzing the working of our complex systems with reference to values and principles, listening, arguing, persuading, and being persuaded (*HEX* 1996, p.21).

That same year Maria Farland reported on the renewed interest in the academy of “theorizing the public,” but was critical of this “academic turn” toward the public which “ironically” had become the same kind of “hyper-specialized, disciplinary mode of inquiry that first disconnected academic professionals from their public mission” (*HEX* 1996, p.51).

Differences arose about the idea of public scholarship as the discussion continued in subsequent issues of *HEX*, but it tacitly confirmed that the idea was about a process, not a product. Having been part of a Kettering workshop on the subject, Alan Wolfe thought the idea of public scholarship, as developed by Rosen and others, was a “flawed concept.” Seeing it as a “legacy of the 1960s,” Wolfe argued that “my obligation to the public is to offer what I know: knowledge discovered by retreating into private space” (*HEX* 1997, p.40). In the same issue, Rosen offered an eloquent rejoinder —

We need civic-spirited intellectuals like Wolfe, who feel they owe the public their best estimate of what’s happening and why. But we also need people ready for a different kind of work — done, not for the public or its elected officials, but *with* people who are trying to become a public, a community able to know in common what its members cannot know alone and to imagine the possibilities their democracy may yet afford (*HEX* 1997, p.48).

Another contributor, Jean Cameron, put it this way: “Public scholarship has the same relationship to public intellectualism as systematic change has to a soup kitchen” (*HEX* 1997, p.8).

Going forward, we wanted to know more about who was “doing” public scholarship and what were the “new connections” that institutions were forging with the public. Scott Peters began harvesting stories of public scholarship in the land grant system by telling about the Teen Assessment project of the University of Wisconsin (*HEX* 1997) and, in a later *HEX* issue, about the

University of Minnesota's West Central Experiment Station (*HEX* 1999). Scott came to understand public scholarship as "a craft," and other contributors provided their stories and viewpoints.

In an interview in *HEX* 2002, Julie Ellison, English professor and director of Imagining America, "a national coalition of artists and humanists at the intersection of higher education and community life," told me that defining public scholarship should remain "open-ended."

What is public scholarship for people who make and think about culture? Who knows? It's like the word "imagining" — in the present tense, we're always questioning and answering. But we never arrive — I hope (pp.19-20).

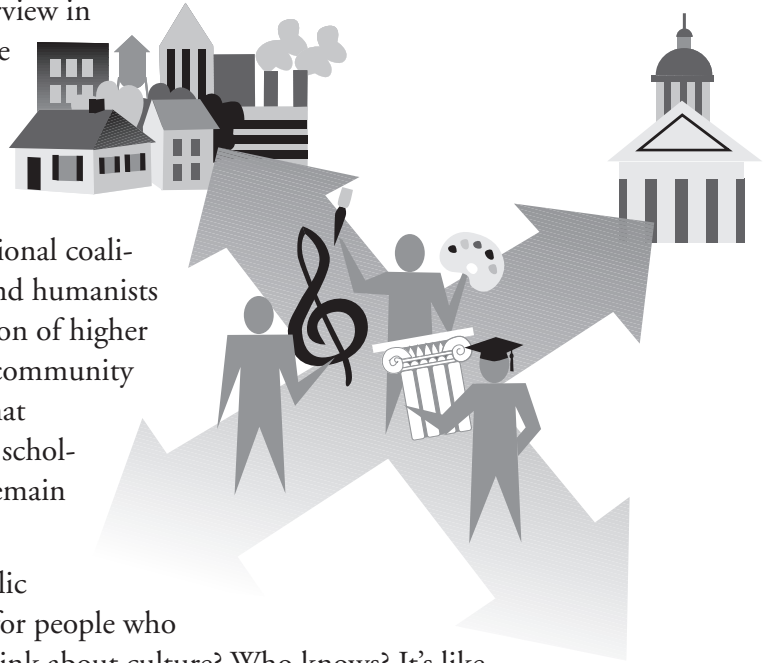
In this year's issue, Robert Kingston and Peter Levine continue to explore some of the differing views about the idea of public scholarship, and Douglas Challenger, reflecting on his public scholar work in New Hampshire, sees a need for —

creating the *structural conditions and institutional legitimacy* that would enable full-time faculty to more easily and routinely integrate public scholarship into their professional lives (*HEX* 2004).

The idea is still a work-in-progress.

"Public-Making"

What gradually became clear from the reports of Scott Peters and others in the field, was that public scholars and their institutions often find themselves necessarily being *organizers* of publics. David Mathews responded that "the lack of a public is a problem," and noted that "a public" is not an "audience" or a "market" but something more dynamic, and its existence or sustainability could not be taken for granted. As he had observed earlier,



Organizers attempting to build public relationships aren't just trying to solve specific problems, they are trying to change the way people habitually deal with one another (*HEX* 1998, p.71).

Like public scholarship, the idea of “public-making” was seen as a process with the potential to engage citizens in democratic deliberation and generate “public knowledge” and “public work” that can arise from such deliberation. For Robert McKenzie —

Building deliberative skills as citizens involves reconceptualizing the meaning of the word “politics” to include all those ways, not just governmental, in which citizens make decisions together about their common life (*HEX* 1998, p.60).

For Conor Seyle, a student at Texas A&M, organizing students for democratic deliberation is making such deliberation “a new *way* of doing things rather than a new *thing* to do...” (*HEX* 2000, p.56). For Harry Boyte, the deliberative project renews a much-needed “focus on public judgment, or wisdom (*HEX* 2000, p.48).

We soon heard from those who were putting the idea of public-making into practice. We learned about John Wheat's work to form the Rural Alabama Health Alliance as well as Christa Slaton and Auburn's civic capacity-building in Uniontown. Doug Challenger and Joni Doherty told of a collaborative planning effort of campus and community in Rindge, New Hampshire, and there were the stories of Virginia Tech and Gulf Coast Community College in Florida creating “public space” for deliberation through their Public Policy Institutes.

With such “public-making,” the deliberative process has the potential to create a “distinctive kind of knowledge ... similar to what scholars call socially constructed knowledge.” David Mathews called it “public knowledge” (*HEX* 1998, p.76), and Noëlle McAfee, whose work on deliberation and public knowledge is the subject of my interview with her in this issue, makes the observation that “the ancient view of reasoning as conversation holds that reasoning itself is a social event.”

Another potential consequence of deliberation is Harry Boyte's robust idea of “public work” that develops commonalities among diverse groups and complements their deliberations together. At the University of Minnesota's Center for Democracy and Citizenship, Harry and his colleagues consider “professional identities,” both inside and outside the academy, as not only unequal to public problems, but presenting serious obstacles to their resolution. For Boyte

the idea of public work “discomforts those who want to maintain distance.” In an interview, Harry made clear that —

Democracy understood as the unfinished work of the people will entail a reintegration of academic identities and practices with local civic cultures and identification with other citizens. It will also mean the reinvigoration of “publics” themselves, citizens who act in more public-regarding ways, who think of themselves in less personalized, aggrieved, and narrowly righteous ways. Higher education’s civic reconstruction will be key to the reconstruction of publics (*HEX* 2000, p.44).

Relating the idea of “public work” to students, Harry saw, A tremendous pent-up ... desire for educational experiences tied to action that makes a difference on all the problems that they’ve heard about all their lives, but which, without ways for them to act, seem overwhelming. Most service experiences simply don’t offer opportunities to address the deeper roots of public problems (p.46).

Phillip Sandro, an ally of Boyte’s in Minnesota, cautioned, however, that ideas about democracy that inform civic education are “contested terrain.” For Sandro, “the questions of how to conceptualize and do democracy are at play both on campuses and in the broader society (*HEX* 2002, p.47). In this year’s issue, David Cooper explores what he calls the “interesting and insightful paradox” that “students hate the idea of civic engagement but they welcome opportunities to become civically engaged.” For Cooper, students don’t need to be informed of their “civic duties” but offered ideas for modeling,

The right way to be in a community, particularly how to subordinate individual desires to a larger public purpose — even while living in a market economy that defines success by the fulfillment of those individual desires (*HEX* 2004).

Certainly, the idea of “public work” would appear to do that.

There have, of course, been other forms of “civic engagement” going on at many institutions, which was first detailed in *HEX* 1999 by Nancy Thomas and Deborah Hirsch. There have also been discussions in *HEX* about democratic practices or their potential in the classroom, in the National Collegiate Honors Council (Murchland, 1997, Finnell and Knauer, 1998), in the arts and humanities

(Prenshaw, 1998, Ellison, 2002) and among a vanguard of young scholars now working outside of the academy (Farland, 2000), in “public science” (Lacy, 2001), and “civic environmentalism” (Light, 2003).

David Mathews remarked in last year’s issue that *HEX*’s role is “not to criticize the good work that is already going on, but to ask if something else isn’t required” (p.74). Speaking of the ideas that comprise a democratic model in higher education, Mathews takes the long view —

A hundred years from now, I hope scholars will find evidence that the parts we see today, did, in fact, add up to something larger. I hope this will prove to have been an era when academe returned to its democratic moorings.

“Movement Sensibilities...”

How then do “the parts we see today” eventually gain, not just a hearing, but legitimacy in higher education? There has been some discussion in *HEX* about incentives, rewards, and changing the culture of the academy, but offering one agenda for more than 3,000 institutions ignores many other possibilities in the decentralized higher education enterprise peculiar to the United States. There are probably as many dimensions to the challenge as there are institutions.

Parker Palmer would start with “divided” individuals, not their institutions (*HEX* 1996). We have learned from contributors and others that there are many educators who personally and professionally quarrel with the prevailing economic model in higher education. For example, Harry Boyte discovered in interviews of senior faculty at the University of Minnesota, that “There is a palpable hunger for more public experiences” (*HEX* 2000, p.47), which ties into what Jay Rosen noted in another context — “every profession is credentialed and chartered in a way that ultimately begins with public service, the public interest, or some other classically public value” (*HEX* 2000, p.19). Outwardly such educators conform to the norms of professional life but inwardly they acknowledge a different imperative — to reconnect with the deeply personal reasons they entered a particular field in the first place. Palmer shrewdly observed that —

When an organizational mentality is imposed on a problem that requires movement sensibilities, the result is often despair (*HEX* 1996, p.5).

As an alternative, the “affirmation” one does not receive from an organization can be received from “movement friends” and developed with them. In *HEX 2003*, Barry Checkoway described the potential of a similar process among like-minded colleagues on a single campus. For Parker Palmer, “The genius of movements is paradoxical: They abandon the logic of organizations in order to gather the power necessary to rewrite the logic of organizations” (p.7).

It is difficult to predict how such “movement sensibilities” would proceed but I suspect they would eventually challenge the current social orientation of would-be scholars in their graduate training (a subject that James Norment discussed in *HEX 1996*); movement sensibilities would eventually ask for a reevaluation of what standards should be used for promotion and tenure and who should be included in making that decision (a subject John Wheat touched on in *HEX 2001*); movement sensibilities would eventually influence the accreditation agencies and what they require of institutions in assessing the progress they have made in meeting their stated missions and goals (a subject that William Hubbard, a trustee himself, addressed in *HEX 2001*); movement sensibilities would eventually align with those trustees of both private and public institutions who want to make room for the democratic model and can use their leverage to provide suitable visibility and rewards; and movement sensibilities would eventually seek allies in federal government agencies to use their substantial resources and influence to affect how research agendas are developed.

* * *

“To arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.” That passage from T.S. Eliot, which was invoked by David Cooper describing his own journey in higher education (*HEX 2002*, p.36), could just as well describe the journey that *HEX* has made during the past ten years and my talking that walk in this piece.

It certainly became apparent in writing the piece, if I didn’t know it already, that David Mathews and his colleagues at Kettering have been the architects for *HEX*’s developing story of American higher education, with a historical foundation recovered and the intellectual scaffolding in place for an actual house to be built on a democratic model. There still remains a great deal more to be said just as there is a great deal more to be done. For purposes of this sense-making exercise, however, it seems appropriate that David, in his “Afterword,” have the last word...

WHAT IS “PUBLIC” ABOUT WHAT ACADEMICS DO?

An exchange with Robert Kingston and Peter Levine

David Brown, coeditor of the Higher Education Exchange, asked Robert Kingston, editor of the Kettering Review, and Peter Levine, a Research Scholar at the University of Maryland’s Institute for Philosophy & Public Life, to explore their differences concerning what is meant by “public scholar” and “public-making” as those concepts have been developed in recent years in the pages of HEX and elsewhere.

Brown: Would both of you try your hand at clarifying what a “public scholar” is or should be?

Kingston: Your question is particularly intriguing, since so many of us use the term without noting whether it is a technical term or a term of art — and certainly without reference to any commonly understood definition. I guess that, for me, the beast has two characteristics that are of importance. First, I take it for granted that the scholar is highly trained in the practice of a particular intellectual discipline — that is to say, a kind of choreography of the mind that determines his or her way of looking at and reprising what is seen in the world around — as well as a particular body of knowledge that seems to make his or her characteristic style of “dancing” work more easily with some orchestras than others.

But said scholar, thus equipped, is also a citizen who lives in the world with other people who are variously affected (in the obvious Deweyian sense) by actions undertaken by any one of them or any group of them. Thus our “public scholar” *becomes* a public scholar on the occasions and to the degree that he or she uses that professional way of thinking and body of knowledge in a manner that is directly helpful to fellow citizens who are confronting (with the scholar) a societal problem that affects them all, although not all in the same way.

The public scholar is not an *expert* who brings particular knowledge and a particular discipline to design or apply a specific, functioning *solution* to a given problem but one whose cast of mind and occasionally relevant knowledge of detail can enrich a

shared or “public” understanding of the dilemma in which our lives happen to be passing. A public scholar, I guess, is thus on a par with a public plumber or a public garbage collector, or a public senator at a town meeting or public forum!

Levine: I’d like to avoid using the term, “public scholar” (which originated with John Dewey and C. Wright Mills) to describe authors who are popular and accessible and reach large audiences. There’s nothing wrong with being a best-selling author or a TV commentator, but people who are attracted to Dewey and Mills have something else in mind.

I don’t yet have a general definition of “public intellectual,” but I can think of three examples of the kind of work I mean.

Brown: For you “public scholar” and “public intellectual” are interchangeable for purposes of this discussion?

Levine: That’s right.

Brown: OK, please go ahead.

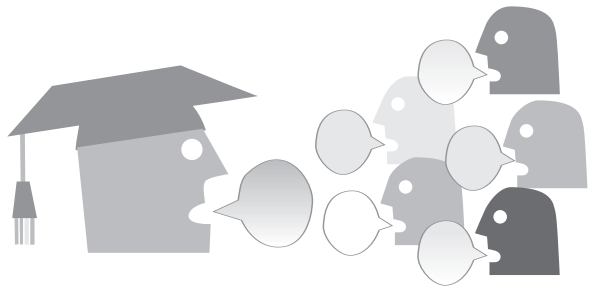
Levine: The first kind of work I have in mind is community-based research. This is work that involves a genuine collaboration between professional scholars and a concrete collection of other people. For example, we are beginning a project in Prince Georges County, Maryland, that aims to determine the effects of one’s physical location on healthy behaviors (specifically, nutritious eating, and exercise). This is a scientific research project involving an interdisciplinary team at the university. The intention is to create generalizable results, so that planners and others will be able to see whether communities can best reduce obesity by getting rid of fast-food outlets; or by attracting healthy restaurants; or by making grocery stores accessible by foot; or by clustering food stores near parks (etc). Our project happens to be public scholarship because a group of nonscholars — in this case, high school students — helped us identify the topic and will help us to think about what variables probably affect their own behavior. They will also collect street-level data using Palm Pilots, and will learn to construct maps and graphs of value to neighbors. It’s this collaboration between professional researchers and nonprofessional community members that makes the research “public.”

The second kind of work I have in mind involves participation in campaigns and social movements. Over the years, I have played small roles in nonpartisan political movements for campaign finance reform, civic education, civic renewal, digital media reform, public journalism, civil investing, youth voting,

and deliberative democracy. Each of these movements has united existing organizations in fairly formal coalitions. Coalition members have discussed, negotiated, and sometimes deliberated about tactics, strategies, goals, and values. Professional scholars hardly ever lead such movements, but they can help by introducing relevant research findings, writing for various audiences, and organizing activities within the academy (which is itself a powerful social institution).

The third kind of work involves research about social issues, communities, or institutions. This would describe most research in the social sciences, the professional schools, and the humanities. What makes some such work “public” is the presence of a real dialogue between the scholar and those studied. A literary critic who writes about contemporary Southern fiction is an intellectual. She is a public intellectual if she is eager for contemporary Southern novelists to read her criticism, if she writes in a way that will interest them, and if she listens to their responses and uses their conversations to inform her own work.

Kingston: Peter, I respect your caution toward defining a “public intellectual” and wish I had a more cautious disposition myself. You seem to suggest that a scholar may become a “public intellectual” when he chooses to join with and put his scholarship at the service of a broader public. This may be done, you explain, in the context of community problems, political campaigns or social movements, and — especially if he is a social scientist — through academically acceptable research that entails “a real dialogue” between the scholar and the issues, communities, or institutions that he is studying. Your “public scholar,” therefore, exists in something akin to an anthropologist’s relationship to



a community being studied. And these contexts suggest that the scholar will work *publicly* only in relatively small or localized communities and on contemporary problems, and that he will work only within his familiar academic frame of reference, as a scholar.

Now all of these instances represent to me thoroughly acceptable patterns for scholars to trace in the worlds in which

they live. Yet what troubles me in moving toward a definition from these examples is that they all seem to place primacy on what the scholar may offer toward solving or clarifying a public dilemma *through application of specialized, or expert, knowledge*, rather than by participation, *inter pares*, in sharing the burden of that dilemma. Thus you do not seem to think that scholars necessarily have the obligation to contribute to society as public intellectuals but rather as experts; and you clearly infer that those whose trained scholarly attention is drawn toward circumstances of other than contemporary life would be likely to find the call to this kind of “public” scholarship less than persuasive.

This endangers what I think of as the obligation of scholars and teachers — and especially of scholars who *are* teachers — to present their work in the context of an acute and necessarily expressed concern for the realities of contemporary social and political life. For you, the public intellectual is someone who can offer to the problems of contemporary life some practically, socially useful, professional skills — and is prepared to do so; I incline, rather — and perhaps this is a mere fantasy — to imagine someone who values his or her scholarship and brings its discipline to bear *always* on challenges of the polity and the society in which that knowledge is being pursued. I’m not suggesting that, if I were a scholar of Old English literature, I should currently be churning out little papers on, for example, “Preemptive Feminism: the Politics of Grendel’s Mother”! Suchlike attempts to dress the past in anachronistic scanties of the contemporary world make me distinctly uneasy. But I would not read *Beowulf*, or *King Lear*, or the second book of *Paradise Lost* — and I certainly would not teach them — if I did not think and could not demonstrate that they had a direct bearing on *my* understanding of U.S. foreign policy at the present time. As Jefferson observed, the world belongs always to the living generation; and that world includes all of the world’s literature. So it should be taught; and being learned, it should inform practical judgments of the present.

Levine: Bob, I think of a “public intellectual” as someone who joins a group or community and tries to help, or even prod, that concrete collection of people to become self-reflective and thoughtful about their own problems and interests; conscious of their own opportunities, choices, limitations, and tradeoffs; aware of their disagreements and the reasons for them; and capable of “political” action (broadly understood). To me, this is not applying expertise, but rather “sharing a burden” with the public (in your words).

“There are, however, real risks and tradeoffs involved in the effort to become more public.”

Offering professional facts or opinions can advance these goals. For example, if a scholar writes an editorial about some public problem, this may help a community to become self-aware and may modestly increase the chance that citizens will act politically. However, I am much more interested in other ways of helping communities understand themselves and to become politically effective. Specifically, I admire efforts to organize collective projects of research or deliberation in which nonscholars play leading roles. When scholars assist or lead communities in such projects, they may be guided by their own disciplinary training. For instance, I’m working with social scientists who use computers to represent human geography; this is a powerful tool that communities can use to become more self-aware. Using methods developed by geographers, groups of citizens can pose their own questions, collect street-level data, and see illuminating visual representations of their environment.

There are, however, real risks and tradeoffs involved in the effort to become more public. As I’ve said before, public scholarship is not simply a good idea; it’s a promising idea that involves serious costs and dangers. In community-based research, one can easily exploit community members by failing to give them true leadership roles, instead using them for labor and legitimacy. On the other hand, one can genuinely share responsibility and power, and end up with substandard research as a result. (Specifically, the research results may be invalid or may not be generalizable.)

In addition, public intellectuals who engage in social movements can become overly strategic, looking for useful arguments rather than seeking the truth. And finally, a “public intellectual,” cannot study the distant past, because partnerships with dead people are impossible; yet historical research is extremely important. Finally, public scholarship cannot concern very large-scale phenomena, even though we need research on the macro scale. Note that I never said all scholars should be public intellectuals; I just think we need some more of them.

Kingston: Peter, your “public intellectual” is no different from other individual citizens who, by some accident of training, experience, or personality, are able to encourage others to exercise the responsibilities that should engage *every* citizen. Yet your special kind of public scholar still remains self-consciously engaged in “legitimate” scholarly research in the public context, primarily the *local* public context.

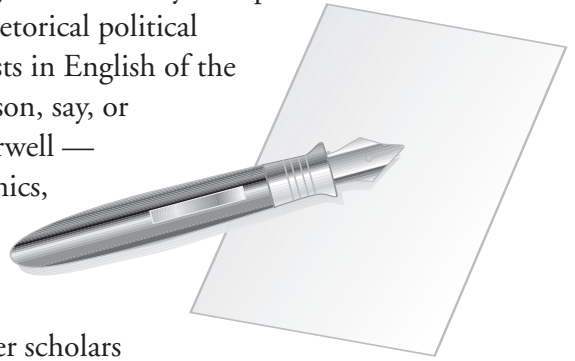
My public scholars, on the other hand, are those who would more often introduce the fruits of their scholarship *into* public dialogue than expect scholarly findings to be drawn *out of* such dialogue. Some scholars — the practitioners of university extension under the auspices of land grant colleges tend to be useful examples — may, in fact, both use and add to their research while engaging as fellow citizens with their peers; but my public scholar is preeminently the scholar whose historical research and concern with large-scale phenomena are readily brought to bear on contemporary dilemmas. More than that, he or she has the peculiar opportunity to bring into the public dialogue, as though they represented personal experience, the outcomes of historical research and “research on the macro scale.”

Physicist or philosopher, artist or anthropologist, the scholar’s *academic* experience has supposedly generated an understanding of more than common breadth — useful at least in some contexts. If that is in fact the case, then it would be a pity to caution — as I think Peter does — *against* the public scholar whose eyes focus high, whose reach is broad, whose voice carries afar on the air (or cable).

Brown: Bob, I take it then that you would like Peter to reconsider the distinction he makes between scholars who work on local issues and those who enter dialogue with the nation as a whole.

Kingston: The distinction that I think is important is not between the scholars who help out with local problems (as Peter seemed to be recommending) and those who pontificate on broader national (or international) issues. The distinction that I would emphasize is, rather, that between those who *work* on issues (whether local or not) and those who “*enter dialogue*,” whether with a nation or the county or the town or the village or whatever other name one wants to give to the community of shared, collective interest. That is what comes to my mind when I think of “public scholarship” — and to be so engaged means working toward a political judgment and, therefore, working with other people in the hopes that, together with them, a public judgment may be found. For this reason, I’m inclined to be mistrustful of an emphasis on faculty at work on their specialized interest within the local community; and I very much approve of those scholars who take the trouble to talk — yes, and even to publish — their own opinions, as citizens, on matters that are political and come before citizens for their political judgments. For that reason, I think a

public scholar may be obliged occasionally to cap scholarly findings with a rhetorical political judgment. The great essayists in English of the past 300 years — Dr. Johnson, say, or Ruskin, and on through Orwell — were scholars, if not academics, and their example may be worth emulation.



Levine: Bob and I don't disagree about whether scholars should offer their own informed opinions in public. Engaging in debates (as a speaker and listener) exemplifies deliberation. Our public discourse would be much poorer if academics and other intellectuals failed to speak publicly in their own distinctive voices. Sometimes their comparative advantage is indeed breadth of vision, as Bob says.

However, I have wanted to draw attention to a different kind of work: not engaging in public debates on one's own behalf, but rather increasing other people's capacity for deliberation and political action. This is the kind of work that I would like to call "public scholarship." A public scholar, in this sense, takes direct responsibility for creating public dialogues or opportunities for public learning.

I do not think such work is necessarily more important than expressing one's own opinions. But building civic capacity is harder to do well, so we ought to spend some time thinking about how best to do it. Furthermore, it is poorly rewarded in academia. There are all kinds of incentives for making influential arguments to large audiences, but there are few rewards for direct work in "public-building" (which must often be done entirely behind the scenes, with a minimum of grandstanding). Finally, building civic capacity fills a practical gap that is left by other forms of public engagement. If one makes an argument on the op-ed page of the *New York Times*, there is not much chance that anyone will act in response to it, unless people already have civic competence and capacity. Thus I think that some intellectuals, some of the time, ought to work explicitly on "public-building." This means setting aside their own policy objectives and working to empower non-scholars as researchers and political agents.

Brown: Building civic capacity, as you put it, Peter, is sometimes referred to as "public-making," which is a concept that Bob has said needs some clarification about what it embraces and what

"A public scholar ... takes direct responsibility for creating public dialogues..."

it is designed to effect. Does building such capacity start with how students are educated?

Kingston: It seems to me that “public-making” is problematic, at least when it challenges scholars, particularly, to perform this function from within their institutions in which it is, for most of them, the last thing they think of themselves as doing. The professor, after all, acts as though his or her commitment is to producing future professors. Although he or she might acknowledge that at least the more liberal parts of a university education have historically been assumed to assist in the development of good citizens, the professor never for one moment assumes that the master of science or doctor of philosophy degree toward which his students are pointed is in any context assumed to be a measure of citizenship. So the mere phrase “public-making” doesn’t help us very far toward a more practical concern with how to do it in the university.

Frankly, I don’t share the sense of some of my colleagues that the “forum method,” the deliberative approach to pedagogy itself, is important. In fact, I’m rather nervous about that idea. I do think that most students within the university are in an apprentice stage. I do think that professors have some things that they must communicate and some particular disciplines in which they must exercise their students — just as, more obviously, the athletics coach knows very clearly who is doing the training and who is being trained for what particular end. That, I think, is the fundamental nature of the university. “Public-making” is a subject for living, not for teaching; but the university could be a wonderful place for learning how to live — if the faculty had learned it themselves.

Eventually, the most important *public* questions turn out to be unanswerable questions, with an understanding of which we are required to live, in a world among others who persist in understanding them differently. I suspect that to pursue that goal, we need to spend more time, as academic planners, focusing on the parts of our students’ lives that are not presumed to be encapsulated within the subject matter of academic disciplines. Many years ago, a very old professor at a very old university insisted to me “it doesn’t matter what you study, as long as you study it thoroughly, deeply, and know your way about it well.” I wasn’t sure at the time whether that was profound wisdom or silly twaddle. Nor am I now! But I do think that the subjects we study, at least on the threshold of the academic world in our undergraduate lives, are of no importance in themselves. Their importance has to do with the

way in which we apprehend the world within which and about which they are presented as relevant. I suppose that I was so deeply buried in the humanities, from very early in my life — in years that I can scarcely even remember as a child — that I really do take education to be designed primarily to teach us fallen creatures, who are political animals, how to behave socially. I taught literature with that conviction; I think I would have taught with similar motives had I been a physicist.

“Properly to serve a democratic society, the teaching university may have to change its culture.”

Properly to serve a democratic society, the teaching university may have to change its culture. And I recognize that changing a culture takes a long, long time. I don't believe that a few community colleges sponsoring community forums represents a change in the culture of higher education, although theirs may be a useful activity for institutions to undertake. And I don't believe that a few deliberative forums in the classroom represent a change in the culture of higher education (and, in fact, I'd much rather they *not* be in the classroom). A change in the culture will only follow a changed understanding of what the democratic society of the twenty-first century is all about.

Levine: But I think it should be pointed out that the culture of American universities is not uniform; rather, it is passionately contested. There are concepts of the university as an economic engine; as a provider of skills that are valued by the job market; or even as a finishing school. There are colleges that aim to nurture intellectual skills in individual students through skillful and dedicated teaching.

There is also the model of highly professionalized research institutions, in which professors and graduate students are mainly accountable to international experts in their own fields; their duty is to generate knowledge. Scholars see production of public goods (such as scientific knowledge) as a form of “good citizenship.” Students, for their part, benefit from exposure to professional work on unanswered questions. They are not simply told about historical knowledge, for example; they watch it being generated and wrestle with live questions. I find this model more attractive than many people in the Kettering community probably do. It is an ideal that is under considerable economic pressure, especially in areas (such as the humanities and basic sciences) where research lacks market value.

Another model is that of the “engaged university,” which works with citizens, supports civic culture and civil society, and trains its own students to be effective members of democratic

communities. Clearly, this model is not dominant, although it does prevail in certain institutions, from Portland State University to Wagner College in New York. It has deep roots in the land grant movement, as Scott Peters' research has revealed; and today it has a major influence on projects like the living-learning communities that I described earlier.

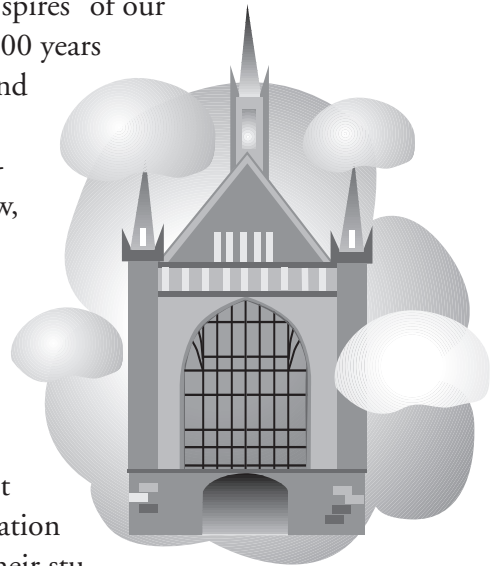
All these models have been in conflict for a long time. If anything, I think interest in the "engaged university" is growing, albeit slowly.

Kingston: Let us hope you are right! And certainly you are right about the range of somewhat differently focused institutions of higher education in our country today. You yourself, Peter, add to the luster of a distinguished research institution that does the very things you have outlined earlier in this exchange. In my mind, you are a remarkable group there, in that you perform genuine public service in your research.

Yet I wonder if the differences between our various institutions are, in fact, as significant (or as encouraging) as we sometimes like to think. There is irony in the recognition that many centuries ago, when the medieval university was a religious institution and an ivory tower, its proper business was thought to be with both religion and society, to be both "political" and in fact politically engaged. The "dreaming spires" of our pseudo-gothic institutions a mere 200 years

ago housed very worldly dreams. And if the institution was turned into a more reticent fairyland by self-satisfied and retiring scholars in the "low, dishonest" decades (to borrow a thought from W.H. Auden) of the last century, before the European hegemony dissolved, yet the seeds of social discontent and political dissent were still being nurtured there, even then. I am not confident that our institutions of higher education today adequately urge the lives of their stu-

dents (and of their faculties) toward an understanding of the responsibilities that citizens have for self-government. Ours is a world where individual "selves" are hard to hear so political parties are bound rather to the wheels of *interest* than to the promise of a *public good*. The university increasingly prepares its students for the



pursuit of self-interest, as the oddly, oxymoronic intent of our American democracy.

Levine: But I would point out that colleges and universities are widely experimenting with approaches to “public-making” that go beyond the formal academic curriculum. There is community-based research, which I described earlier. There is a huge amount of service-learning, which (at its best) involves students in both political action and serious, guided reflection. There are opportunities for students to participate in the governance of colleges and universities — although we know too little about the effects of such participation. At my university, students in certain dormitories work collectively for several years on a single public problem. In one dormitory, the problem always has a scientific dimension; in another, there’s a strong emphasis on service-learning. Such purposive residential communities are increasingly common. Experiments with deliberation also belong on this list, although I agree with Bob that they are just one tool among many.

Brown: Another question comes to mind: What distinguishes “public-making” from what most people think of as “community-building?”

Levine: I would define a “community” as an aggregation of people who have some sense of belonging together, of “we-ness.” For its members, a community is not merely a means to various ends that they possessed before they joined; rather, its maintenance and flourishing are intrinsic values. Not all communities are geographical — Jews, for instance, have formed a dispersed community for 2,000 years.

“Community development” either means (1) increasing the sense of “we-ness” — of belonging and cohesion — in a group of people; or else (2) helping such a group to “develop” economically or socially. The second definition can actually have very little to do with social or psychological connectedness; it can simply mean promoting economic growth at the micro scale rather than in a national economy.

In ordinary usage, the word “public” has no evaluative significance — it means any large group of people, whether they are engaged or apathetic, wise or idiotic. But in John Dewey’s idiosyncratic lexicon, a “public” is a group of citizens who have developed the capacity to define, debate, learn, and collectively address social problems. Thus “public-making” presumably means increasing such capacity. I happen not to be very communitarian,

“In ordinary usage, the word ‘public’ has no evaluative significance....”

so for me, increasing group cohesion is not an animating goal. But I am taken by the goal of “making publics.”

Kingston: Peter and I are in sympathy here, I think.

Whenever we focus on rhetoric about “the community,” we tend mostly to be slipping into a nostalgic predetermination about the nature of an ideal polity where, despite different personal opinions, all of its residents can readily arrive at harmonious conceptions of community stasis in almost a communitarian sense. Now there’s something odd about that — because such communities are a rapidly diminishing phenomenon; and they diminish largely because they are less appealing and less successful today than we pretend they were 100 years ago. So the civic task that challenges the contemporary democracy is not to “build community” in the sense that nineteenth-century America understood, but to “make a public.” In effect, we nowadays have to make a public in order to provide for a “community” — a community that is no longer primarily the geographic kind of “community” that people have in mind when they invoke the (to me) outmoded term, “community-building.” The focus, therefore, needs to be first, not on improving “my” community, desirable as that may be, but on generating public will to reach judgment in heterogeneous communities of citizens; then to act collectively.

Brown: That’s very helpful, Bob. Now let me wind this up by reminding Peter that he has said that underlying both public scholarship and public-making is an assumption that participatory and deliberative democracy is important, but he also asked the provocative question “What if citizens generally don’t want to get involved?”

Levine: I take seriously the goal of helping to increase the public’s capacity for self-rule. I want to be part of concrete, practical efforts to do so. Thus I care to what degree Americans are willing or eager to adopt responsibilities such as deliberating or forming institutions. If, for example, John Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse are correct in their book *Stealth Democracy* (which argues that Americans have very little desire to deliberate), this will make life difficult and necessitate more complex and arduous approaches than would be needed if Americans were yearning to participate civically. Finding out that Americans deeply dislike civic engagement wouldn’t change my own goals; I would still *want* them to participate. But it would force me to choose certain tactics rather than others. I might, for example, devote more

“So the civic task that challenges the contemporary democracy is not to ‘build community’ in the sense that nineteenth-century America understood, but to ‘make a public.’”

attention to civic education at the primary level and less effort to increasing opportunities for public participation in formal politics. In fact, this describes the trajectory of my professional career. I started at Common Cause, seeking to open doors to participation. Now I work mainly on civic education at the kindergarten to twelfth grade level, hoping that young people can be made more interested in walking through any doors to civic engagement that are open.

Brown: Bob, I'll let you have the last word...

Kingston: I do accept that today most of our fellow citizens do not want to get involved. I believe that it is always easier not to think and that we often don't begin to think until something threatens us, as individuals, dreadfully. I don't doubt that, in the first democracy, some of the Athenian slaves wished that they were citizens who could participate in the democracy in which they lived; but equally, some of those eligible to participate in that democracy probably preferred not to do so and many were even relieved, no doubt, when the democracy in which they were expected to participate ceased to function. Being civilized — being prepared to deliberate with un-alike others — continues to be an uphill struggle.

Institutions of higher education — of which we have a healthy variety nowadays as Peter has reminded us — provide ideally a space where most of us *might* first learn to engage in that struggle. And a space where some of us — scholars — who choose it for life, may continue to engage effectively. But a university preoccupied with the mechanics of course and grade, the glitter of scholarship as means of self-advancement, and the provision of service by the unskilled to the misunderstood — tends not to be such space.

I do not believe that there is anything more important than learning how to become an effective democratic citizen. (And please understand that I do not think of that as at all the same thing as learning to be a “good American” citizen.) It is because “participatory and deliberative democracy is important” but “citizens generally don't want to get involved” that public scholarship and public-making could be the first and the ultimate purposes of our institutions of education in this would-be deliberative democracy of ours.

Brown: Thank you, Bob. Thank you, Peter.

EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY: A CONVERSATION IN TWO KEYS

By David D. Cooper

Editor's note: In March 2001, a diverse group of 33 juniors and seniors representing 27 colleges and universities gathered at the Johnson Foundation in Racine, Wisconsin for the Wingspread Summit on Student Civic Engagement, sponsored by Campus Compact. Nominated by faculty and community service directors, the students participated in candid group discussions focused on their generation's "civic experiences" in higher education.

The New Student Politics: The Wingspread Statement on Student Civic Engagement, written by Sarah E. Long, then an undergraduate at Providence College, describes the Wingspread students' thinking and their practices of political and civic involvement, politics, and service. The Statement provides specific suggestions about how campuses can improve their commitment to student civic engagement through service-learning, increased support for student political activity, better attentiveness to student voice, and the development of more relevant frameworks for student participation in the political process. The Statement also captures the tensions and promise surrounding meanings the Wingspread students assign to politics and their development as citizens of American Democracy. (Readers can access The New Student Politics at <http://www.compact.org/publication/>.)

In the following essay, David Cooper intersperses a commentary on The New Student Politics with quotes adapted from the Statement. The result is a "conversation in two keys" — a deliberative and reflective dialogue between two generations searching for a common chord to carry on the shared work of democratic citizenship.

By the time my students read *The New Student Politics* they weren't in much of a mood, it seemed to me, to parse and sort through its arguments. Earlier in the semester, they had already been actively involved in public work. They had felt something of the promise of political engagement through public interest research and public literacy projects that brought them into direct contact with senators and representatives at the Michigan state capitol. A centerpiece of the course was, in effect, a classic

lobbying campaign. Students designed, refined, and carried out strategies to distribute among key state legislators a booklet on youth public policy perspectives — *Generation Y Speaks Out: Public Policy Perspectives through Service-Learning* — researched, written, and produced by two previous classes. (An on-line version is available at http://www.msu.edu/~atl/GenY_SpeaksOut.) Our goals were twofold. First, get *Gen Y* into the hands of influential shapers of public policy. Second, present persuasive arguments to those policy shapers that the student voices in *Gen Y* — and the voices of their generation at large — deserve a place in the deliberation and implementation of public policy in Michigan. As one of the original student authors, quoted in a press release drafted by my students, said: “Older generations think we’re slackers, but this type of project shows that we really do care and want to make a difference. Our ultimate goal is to change a law or influence policy in some way. Then we’d know that our voice is really being heard.” In the course of their projects, my students testified before legislative committees, met with house and senate staffers, designed PowerPoint pitches,

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We discovered at Wingspread a common sense that while we are disillusioned with conventional politics (and, therefore, most forms of political activity), we are deeply involved in civic issues through nontraditional forms of engagement. We are neither apathetic nor disengaged. In fact, what many perceive as disengagement may actually be conscious choice.

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wrote letters, e-mails, executive summaries, press releases, etc. Along the way they studied *A Citizen’s Guide to State Government and The Legislative Process in Michigan: A Student’s Guide*. Meanwhile, students had plenty of opportunity to read, write about, and reflect on the rap, made by Robert Putnam and others (whom we read), that their generation was doing more than its part to continue a legacy of disinvestment in our country’s social capital.

By stirring *The New Student Politics* into this learning mix, I thought its self-drawn portrait of a generation deeply committed to political life through nontraditional practices of civic engagement would be catalytic and energizing — adding light, weight, depth, and complexity to our subject, “Public Life in America.” I hoped, too, that the *Statement* would hasten deeper reflection on the role

young people can play in shaping public policy closer to home in Michigan. But instead of galvanizing further critical conversation and reflection, our discussions of *The New Student Politics* just plugged along in fits and starts. I had a heck of a time trying to find some decent wind so I could plot a course through the *Statement*. About the only thing that sprung us from the doldrums was my students' interest in testing a claim made by their Wingspread peers. Do the schools they attend, my students wondered, live up to the charge that colleges and universities must do a better job of offering students more "ways to deepen service-learning and enhance its capacity to promote civic engagement"? The liveliest and most thoughtful critical discussions we had came from research my students did showing that the Wingspread students'

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A number of universities, we agreed at Wingspread, appear to promote service and community outreach as ways to make themselves appear involved but do not seem interested in any real commitment to the outlying community. They seem to view service more as a public relations strategy, while, in reality, they keep the community at arm's length.

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home campuses (including our own), in some cases, had a lot of work to do to live up to that claim, especially the full integration of service-learning practices into general education curricula, majors, and professional degree programs.

What accounted for my students' lukewarm reception of *The New Student Politics*? Were they just fed up with another round of arguments — no matter what the source — about how their generation should find its way onto the public commons and learn to wield, in the words of one of the Wingspread students, the "hammer and chisel" of democratic citizenship?

Or had my students' involvement with conventional practices of civic expression, I wonder, left them ill-prepared for the alternative of "service politics" spelled out in the *Statement*?

Do the civic skills the Wingspread students learn from service opportunities in their local communities differ from or maybe diminish or indeed eclipse those more mainstream skills my own students acquired from drafting public policy briefs, attending legislative committee meetings, and lobbying their state represen-

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The Wingspread dialogues defined a form of political engagement we have chosen to call “service politics.” Service politics is the bridge between community service and conventional politics. At Wingspread we argued that service is alternative politics, not an alternative to politics. Participation in community service is a form of unconventional political activity that can lead to social change, in which participants primarily work outside of governmental institutions; service politics becomes the means through which students can move from community service to political engagement. Those who develop connections to larger systemic issues building on their roots in community service adopt a framework through which service politics leads to greater social change.

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tatives? Had I made a mistake of shifting the service component of the course from interpersonal networks of direct service to institutional practices of organized political participation? Did that weaken or undermine the notion of “service politics” that the Wingspread students see as “the bridge between community service and conventional politics”? Maybe my biggest fear is that I unknowingly initiated my students into those kinds of conventional political activities that the Wingspread students are disillusioned with. As a consequence, had my students and I ended up practicing democracy less in terms of the Wingspread emphasis on the social responsibility of the individual and more in terms of the retrograde civic obligations of the citizenry? If so, no wonder my students, mired in the status quo of conventional politics, didn’t catch fire from the *Statement’s* call “to pursue change in a democratic society.”

These are important questions about pedagogy, disciplinary practices, institutional integrity, politics, history, and intergenerational sociology. They are questions about commitment and my students’ identity and my own (vulnerable) self-image as a teacher, a service-learning practitioner, a member of my university community, and a player in the democratic life of my

community and my country. These are also questions for the service-learning movement. They point to the difficulties and challenges of cross-fertilizing traditions of “service” to local communities and the latest clarion call for “civic engagement” — a coupling that seems so natural in a statement like *The New Student Politics* and on the letterhead of the Campus Compact.

Meanwhile, practitioner faculty and their students and our brethren in student affairs along with our community partners sometimes struggle to get it right.

This class was the latest in a series of experiments begun in 1995 when several colleagues and I organized the Service-Learning Writing Project (SLWP), a research-intensive curriculum development initiative in service-learning and composition studies. We eventually established a new writing course — “Public Life in America” — that fulfills a general education writing requirement and currently enrolls nearly 250 students a year in 12 stand-alone sections. Lately, our interests have turned to the relationship between rhetoric and democratic practices and the uses

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At Wingspread, students expressed frustration about the derogatory ways in which they are often characterized by college and university presidents, faculty, and the public regarding their levels of political and civic engagement. Our contention is that, in fact, we are politically engaged, although we may participate in politics in unconventional ways.

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of deliberative democracy techniques for teaching writing and critical thinking — in particular, public forums and community-based study circles. Those are natural and intellectually fertile connections for many of us at a land grant university teaching in a department with a strong American Studies tradition along with responsibilities for staffing required composition courses for more than 6,000 freshmen a year and overseeing an undergraduate, Master’s, and Ph.D. program in Rhetoric and Professional Writing with an emphasis on public culture studies, rhetoric, and community literacy. While SLWP courses vary widely in content and community partner-

ships, we all agree that argument, deliberation, and active participation in public life are essential ingredients of democracy and civic literacy. Our classes also share a commitment to principles of active and collaborative learning as well as public creation. For democracy to work, we stress to our students, ordinary citizens must take part in the process of identifying social problems, talking constructively about such problems, and finding solutions

together. Much of the burden of reading, critical reflection, and discussion in our classes focuses on the troubling fact that too many citizens today — especially and most obviously young people — are not joining in the ongoing public work of democracy.

Running contrary, perhaps, to the argument in *The New Student Politics* that such disengagement is a conscious choice driven by frustration with conventional politics, my colleagues and I tend to assume that students' disengagement is *not* the flip side of an alternative politics but rather a direct expression of cynicism, apathy, indifference, or a sense of powerlessness.

One of the challenges I've taken away from the Wingspread students is that the moral claims informing the SLWP's public literacy curriculum may be sincere but misdirected. We might be asking the wrong questions: Why have we withdrawn from public association? Why does our democratic system — the envy of the rest of the world — seem to be failing us? Why have so many Americans lost faith in our common life? Instead, maybe we should be asking questions extrapolated from assertions made

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One reason many of us choose to become involved in community service is that we dislike the institutional focus of conventional politics. We are frustrated with the workings of institutions, ranging from the federal government to our own colleges and universities. To many of us, developing real relationships with others through service is civic engagement. We at Wingspread associate affecting people with affecting the system.

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in the Wingspread statement. For example, how can we deepen our students' connections to the community through the kinds of experiences that move them from an awareness of issues into problem-solving strategies? What forms of civic engagements best fit our students' *personal* motivations to get involved — especially their anger, their hope, and the pragmatism they bring to the work of pursuing systemic social change? "Does the rhetoric of public service and being a good neighbor," as the Wingspread students themselves ask, "believe the realities that the students experience in the local community" — and, indeed, on their home campuses and *especially* in our classes? And what traditions in the life of our civic culture best sustain "service politics" as a catalyst for political engagement?

If my presumptions of apathy and disengagement on the part of my students are indeed misdirected, I can take some small comfort from the fact that many others have made similar wrong turns. None of the serious studies that have seeded the widespread notion of the current generation's civic anemia have taken much account of the Wingspread students' new mantra of activism: "community service is a form of alternative politics, not an alternative to politics."

The annual algorithms crunched by the UCLA Higher Education Research Institute's much-watched freshman survey, for example, chart a steady, predictable 15-year decline in student interest in conventional politics. The survey also reports that student volunteerism grew to record levels in the late 1990s, with nearly 72 percent of students reporting that they perform volunteer work and almost two-thirds agreeing that "helping others in difficulty" is an essential objective of their college life. But at no time has it occurred to the statisticians to *correlate* these ostensibly opposing trends into an expression of the Wingspread students' alternative configuration, "service politics." Instead, the pollsters question the validity of the 72 percent figure as a true marker of altruism, arguing that volunteer work looks good on student resumes — thereby reinforcing the caricature of today's college student as cynical and self-involved. No wonder the Wingspread students "reject many of the surveys, studies, and literature that have become the basis for a generalized portrait of young Americans, as this information often disregards local, relational, and unconventional forms of political/civic engagement."

In fairness to my good friends at UCLA, other oracular sources of generational insight are also called into question by "service politics" and the way it shifts democracy's center of gravity from political practices of civic obligation to moral expressions of individual social responsibility. Arthur Levine and Jeanette Cureton seem at a loss to explain a similar disconnect they found among 1990s college students between greater interest in community service and a significantly lower threshold of tolerance for the political arena. Their speculation, frankly, is a little thick. "Though fears and doubts about politics, politicians, and government are extremely high," they write, "students have chosen to engage, albeit through the local and more informal approach of community service. In part, the reason stated for their involvement is that they had no choice; they had to embrace the political

agenda or it would engulf them.” Neil Howe and Bill Strauss, whose popular study, *13th Gen*, bristles with efflorescent cynicism, may get it only half right. In the *13th Gen*, they speculate, “lies a

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Some of us at Wingspread are critical of the fact that many surveys and literature on youth civic disengagement rely solely on conventional political activities — such as voting — as indicators of student political involvement. Students are not engaged in conventional political activities because conventional politics corresponds to an institutional system that we view as antiquated and irrelevant to our concerns and passions for social justice. We have turned away from political engagement and citizenship rooted in institutions and systems in favor of civic engagement through local, community-based activities characterized as “community service” and other local, relational, and unconventional forms of political/civic engagement.

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reason for hope. As a group, they aren’t what older people wish they were but rather what they themselves know they need to be: street-smart survivalists clued into the game of life the way it really gets played....” Hard-bitten realists, in other words, instead of idealists bent on the difficult task, as the Wingspread students say, of achieving “an emerging identity that is not based on an idealized notion of the democratic citizen.”

A similar disconnect shows up in the grim diagnosis conducted by Robert Putnam in his influential autopsy of the American body politic, *Bowling Alone*. Putnam relies on the logic of “generational succession” to chart the steady erosion of social capital during the latter third of the twentieth century, all the way from the canary in the mineshaft of electoral politics to the current low levels of news and information literacy and sluggish grassroots political involvement. Each generation, according to that logic, accelerates the “treacherous rip current” of civic disengagement that scours civil society from our bowling alleys to our neighborhood polling precincts. Putnam’s conclusion: “Americans are playing virtually every aspect of the civic game less frequently today than we did two decades ago” when Baby Boomers came of age

politically. By measuring civic engagement according to conventional political practices — petition signing, for example, or working for a political party and running for public office —

and then aligning those practices to the Boomer juggernaut, it's hard for an alternative expression like "service politics" to register on Putnam's sociological radar screen.

The irony, however, is that the Wingspread students' appreciation of the value of community service as a way to connect moral choices to larger social action is, by Putnam's own definition, a classic manifestation of social capital. The service experience, that is to say, evidences networks of mutual support, cooperation, trust, and even, in the form of service-learning, institutional efficacy. But as an "alternative politics," service politics does not calibrate very well with correlations and frequencies generated by Roper polls. In his "Agenda for Social Capitalists" at the end of the book, Putnam acknowledges the value of school-based community service programs as good ways to exercise and strengthen "the civic muscles of participants." Nonetheless, Putnam treats service-learning, at best, as a bridge that will *lead to* greater student involvement in conventional forms of civic expression such as a return to 1960s levels of voter turnout. Putnam ends up reinforcing the notion of service as an alternative route to politics as usual, not an "alternative politics." He's stuck on a familiar binary: "service," like time in the weight room, is good preparation for the real "civic game."

This much is fairly clear: cynicism, skepticism, pessimism, and an outright rejection of politics as usual runs rampant among our students. But there's something that might not be so clear to the pollsters. Our students are not part of a generation that is civically *disengaged* or ethically disoriented. I am not a social scientist, but I suspect that sociological survey methodologies and quantitative analytical techniques don't do paradox very well. Nonetheless, it is impossible to avoid the paradoxical features of our students' civic profile. Findings from focus groups conducted by KRC Research for the Campus Compact's Student Civic Engagement Campaign show, in fact, that the very term "civic engagement" — broadly defined as "action designed to identify and address issues of public concern" — turns off most students. They "reject the idea [of civic engagement] as irrelevant to their current lives and unsuccessful at inspiring them to take future action." Still, especially among student leaders like those invited to the Wingspread gathering in March 2001, "it is apparent," the KRC "Findings" memorandum concludes, "that the level of civic engagement is strong" when measured by such things as "interpersonal connection," "immediate gratification," "local community

activities,” and “the translation of actions of the individual into positive change.” The value of *The New Student Politics*, it seems to me, is that the Wingspread students articulate an important conceptual scheme — “service politics” — that transforms an apparent contradiction into an interesting and insightful paradox: *our students hate the idea of civic engagement but they welcome opportunities to become civically engaged.*

What do these paradoxes and ironies mean, then, for our teaching? For one thing, they may help explain my own students’ lukewarm reception of *The New Student Politics*. When my students were busy pressing their cases in the corridors of the state capitol, they bristled with activity and energy. Our classroom hummed with the churn of learning. They shut down, for the most part, when I sought to connect that public work to canons of civic literacy and the social contract in America and when I

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Students experience a curricular deficit on their campuses. We perceive our institutions as willing players in the message of deferral of civic responsibility. Higher education is complicit in compartmentalizing the public-civic life and the private-economic life of students. This is illustrated in pedagogy that requires us to live in bifurcated worlds of theory and action. We are told to ingest large amounts of information that point to a concern, yet we are often discouraged from action on our knowledge and idealism until we have safely secured our own economic futures.

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tried to shore up their felt practices of citizenship with an intellectual fretwork of concepts, ideas, and critical readings. The same thing happened with study circles we later convened among senior citizens at a local community center. My students fussed and throbbed with energy as we planned, practiced, and facilitated the study circles. They shuffled through the drill when I tried to leaven those community dialogues with critical reflections on traditions of deliberative democracy in America. Maybe they went through the same motions, then, when we called another time-out from engaged learning projects to discuss and explain and sort through the ideas in *The New Student Politics*, even though those ideas stressed the importance of democratic citizenship as a matter of “build[ing] relationships and connect[ing] with others in concerted action.”

Beyond that, with the help of the Wingspread students (although I’m not sure they would want to claim the credit), I am beginning to sense a shift

in the sorts of teaching challenges we face as the service-learning movement evolves into the “civic engagement campaign.” The old challenge to deeply integrate students’ experiences in their community-service placements with course content is giving way to the new challenge, put simply, of managing the rupture or the disconnect between action and ideas that, for better or worse, characterize our students’ predominant learning style and their *modus operandi* as citizens. While the old challenge was pedagogical, the new challenge, it seems to me, is largely epistemological. Levine and Cureton offer good insight into this disconnect in their analysis of “the widening gap between the ways in which students learn best and the ways in which faculty teach.” Citing research done at the University of Missouri-Columbia, “today’s students,” they note, “perform best in a learning situation characterized by ‘direct, concrete experience, moderate-to-high degrees of structure, and a linear approach to learning. They value the practical and the immediate, and the focus of their perception is primarily on the physical world.’ Three-quarters of faculty, on the other hand, ‘prefer the global to the particular, are stimulated by the realm of concepts, ideas, and abstractions, and assume that students, like themselves, need a high degree of autonomy in their work.’ In short, students are more likely to prefer concrete subjects and active methods of learning. By contrast, faculty are predisposed to abstract subjects and passive learning.”

Such a mismatch of learning styles, teaching practices, and knowledge claims is especially acute — and its impact largely ignored — in the humanities. Marooned in the arcanum of postmodernism, the contemporary humanities are far more preoccupied with theories of social control and construction, ideology, power, cultural production, and the dynamics of social class than they are with the gritty proposition that students might ache to engage actual social and class issues as they play out in their own communities. Suffice it to say that too few literature students, for example, who are immersed in important ideas of racial and gender oppression in their English classes are required or invited by their professors to become civically engaged in those issues as they are lived out and suffered through in their own local communities.

I cannot legitimately speak to the situation in the social and natural sciences, but it seems to me that the humanities must do a better job of bridging this gap the Wingspread students see on

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Colleges have a significant role in helping students develop a public, social imagination. The Wingspread students suggest that colleges challenge them not by informing students of a set of civic duties, but by modeling for us the right way to be in a community, particularly how to subordinate individual desires to a larger public purpose — even while living in a market economy that defines success by the fulfillment of those individual desires.

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their campuses between a culture of ideas and a commitment to action. They witness that gap throughout the geography of their institutions. They recognize, for example, that “uncontested skepticism is welcomed in contemporary university culture as a sign of intellect” while they “long for ideals to believe in and for those ‘idealists’ who will inspire them.” They take pride in “the larger activities and mission of [their campuses that] are aligned with the values of inclusion, justice, reciprocity, community-building, and participatory democracy.” Meanwhile, throughout their conversations in Racine “we concluded that the [university’s] theoretic relationship with the community often differs from the real.” The Wingspread students yearn to make service a more widespread and integral

part of the curriculum, yet they are understandably skeptical over the moral life of their own campuses. Colleges and universities, they write, “rarely provide models for healthy communities, either on campus itself (where the hierarchical nature of the institution often overlooks students’ needs/input when making decisions), or through relationships with the surrounding community.” Finally, they frankly admit that service activities and public work are “rarely celebrated on par with academics” on campuses where administration and faculty encourage students “to be primarily consumers of knowledge and democracy — not active producers.”

These insights spelled out in *The New Student Politics* underscore and advance, in our students’ own words, four responses Elizabeth Hollander, Richard Cone, and I wrote about in 2001 as we considered ways to better engage and empower student voices and clear a path to civil society in our classrooms, and when we wondered whether faculty were up to the task. I don’t think Liz and Dick would mind if I reiterated those responses here as both a coda to this brief commentary and as a way to reframe the key

themes and contributions of *The New Student Politics* to the national civic engagement campaign.

First, we argued in *About Campus*, we must honestly encounter, on their own terms, our students' cynicism and self-involvement. This means we must empathize with and not resent our students' pessimism, ambivalence, and alienation from public life. Surprisingly, we have discovered the rap that today's young people are fatalistic and disengaged does not run very deep. Second, it is important to infuse our teaching practices with the spirit of democracy. We understand democracy not only as a set of political practices but, more important, as a body of moral commitments and ethical claims that inform the climate of values and techniques in our classrooms. Third, we have learned to teach on our feet, seizing on events in the community or nation that offer a teaching moment, even if it means dumping a unit from a carefully designed syllabus. Lastly, we need to struggle to overcome the bias, deeply engrained in Western teaching practices, that a student's "inner life" and "public self" are separate spheres of moral development. On the contrary, they are intimately connected. In the words of Parker Palmer, "only as we are in communion with ourselves can we find community with others."

These same pedagogical principles, we went on to say, can be applied to the campus as a whole. How often do our campuses model the "spirit of democracy" in how decisions are debated and made? How much opportunity do we provide for students to explain the sources of their distance from public life? How much do we integrate thinking about students' inner lives and public selves?

Administrators and others in higher education often dismiss student voice. Instead, we are encouraged to be primarily consumers of knowledge and democracy — not active producers. This sends the negative message that our contributions to knowledge, as well as the very tenets of democracy, are unimportant or misguided. What became evident during the Wingspread Summit was that students want to be in conversation with college presidents and other administrators and not treated as "fine china" brought out to impress trustees and honored guests.

On a more private note, the Wingspread students have emboldened me to a claim I've made so many times in the last few years that I sometimes worry it might lose its critical edge and

moral force. They remind me that listening to student voices and bringing students into a meaningful and productive relationship with civic life are particular and problematic challenges for today's faculty. We humanists, in particular, are drawn to a compelling but competing notion — sanctioned, in part, by the triumph of theory over praxis and, in part, by the cult of meritocracy and specialization we have bought into — that the university and its airy world of ideas is a place apart from the friction, heat, and hurly-burly of the public sphere. This is not the first time I've been left with an unflattering realization coming off the heels of an exercise in generational humility. Maybe if we Boomers just got out of their way, our students could realize the potential of their civic involvement. Those of them gathered at the Wingspread Summit on Student Civic Engagement, in any event, "think time may prove that ours is one of the most politically active generations in recent history."

I hope so. I wish them well.

GETTING THE PUBLIC'S INTELLIGENCE

An interview with Noëlle McAfee

David Brown, coeditor of the Higher Education Exchange, talked with Noëlle McAfee, an associate professor of philosophy at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. This spring she is teaching at Brandeis University as the Allen-Berenson Visiting Associate Professor of Philosophy and Women's Studies. Brown was interested in learning more about her recent work on "public knowledge" and its implications for understanding democratic practice.

Brown: In reading your essay, "Public Knowledge," I was interested in your use of Dewey about "the wingéd words of conversation," where positions are not "fixed and frozen" in the written word but shaped during the give and take of face-to-face exchange. Could you say more about that?

McAfee: There is a profound difference between talking together here and now and passing written words back and forth. For all the ease and convenience of e-mail, I lament the passing of the telephone call. The telephone today seems intrusive, calling on one to answer now, in person, with "wingéd words." I expect a call from my mother or father, a dear friend, or my husband, but I am taken aback by an unscheduled call from someone I know less well. And likewise I hesitate these days to pick up the phone to call someone to settle a question. Instead, regrettably, I send an e-mail, and I pause over every phrase, wondering whether it will convey the nuances or tentativeness I may feel. With the written word we lose that something which, as the autistic scholar Temple Gradin told Oliver Sacks, goes on between nonautistic, "normal" people all the time: "something swift, subtle, constantly changing — an exchange of meanings, a negotiation, a swiftness of understanding so remarkable" that sometimes she wondered "if they were all telepathic."

Most of us, not being autistic, pay no heed to these swift and subtle transmissions that go on throughout our conversations. But now Temple Gradin has taught me to look for these when I observe deliberative forums. I see the way people respond to each other's posture, tone of voice, hesitations, facial expressions and,

most of all, the looks that implore others to understand and heed. I have also been taught by the late philosopher Teresa Brennan that there is a “transmission of affect” that constantly occurs in our interactions with other people. Emotions do actually move about a room. Or, better, they ripple from one person to another as each accommodates the other’s bearing. When people deliberate face-to-face, they are called to respond to so much more than “what” is said; they also respond to the humanity of the others in the room.

All these interchanges, along with their wingéd words, help participants in deliberative forums transform their first, very murky understandings of a political issue into something that eventually captures the many nuances, hills, and valleys of a political problem. They spend the early part of their deliberations framing the issue for themselves by drawing out dimensions that were at first invisible or perhaps only visible to some and not others in the room. These dimensions become visible and shared by their tending to and heeding the humanity of everyone in the room. As each person offers a bit of his or her own perspective and concern about an issue, the participants begin to fashion a more coherent and rich, as well as complex, understanding.

Brown: In “Public Knowledge,” you argue, “our ‘reasoning’ is really no more than the art of conversation we learned from others and carry on with ourselves.” What accounts for your quarrel with those who advocate “full rationality?”

McAfee: I gather from the question you posed that you think there is a real difference between conversation and “full rationality.” But the origin of our notion of reason, if we go back to the Greeks, is *logos*, which originally simply meant *word*, a piece of this symbolic fabric we have fashioned to weave a world with others. In Homer’s epics, the character Menelaos “speaks to himself” as a way of



making sense of something, carrying on with himself what he had learned to do with others. His “speaking to himself” was an act we now call reasoning, but by losing the notion of *logos* as *speaking* we imagine that reason is some purely internal faculty of understanding. I think it is no accident that we have a hard time imagining what thinking would be without some kind of language.

Reasoning is not the isolated activity that Descartes seemed to think it was. It is something we become capable of by virtue of belonging to a human community.

Note that in the *Meditations*, René Descartes’ seventeenth-century book often held up as the inaugural text of modern philosophy, there is not a single other human being. Descartes meditates alone, thinking that in this way he can create a new foundation for the sciences. Descartes uses a method of radical doubt, dismissing anything that is at all dubitable, in order to put knowledge on the right basis. Anyone who reads the book with a glimmer of scrutiny will find that his skepticism puts him into a corner from which he cannot escape without positing a perfect god and a capacity to use “reason” as a way to distinguish between truth and falsity. But his “proofs” for the existence of this perfect god are themselves fallacious and so ultimately is his ground for reason itself. Descartes boxed himself in to this bizarre position because he willfully set aside the obvious, that we are born into a world with others. We are not born in isolation, and what we call reason is not something we can do in isolation.

Let me bring this back to the issue discussed in my essay, “Public Knowledge.” In that article I try to show that it is misleading to think that public deliberations are occasions in which people, one by one, offer reasons in support of their views and assess the views of others, as if each deliberator reasons first alone and then brings this reasoning into conversation with others. Most recent theories of public deliberation — I’m thinking of the views spearheaded by Jürgen Habermas and John Rawls — think that reasoning works along those lines, that individuals offer reasons in public that others will judge in turn. Even though Habermas understands that individuals are constituted through their social relations, when it comes to discussing the way they speak together he refers to the way in which individual participants put forward norms or options that the others will consider. The other participants then each decide whether the proposed option satisfies his or her own interests. Though they are meeting as a group, each reasons individually. If all can agree that the

option is valid, then it passes. But note that the public aspect of this deliberation is that individual reasons are offered in public but still and always produced and judged by individuals.

In contrast, the ancient view of reasoning as conversation holds that reasoning itself is a social event. We reason with others through our conversing, not merely in the presence of others.

When I see people deliberate together about public issues I see this kind of reasoning occurring, in the back and forth of conversation, as people try to unfold a problem together, each offering a perspective, an anecdote, or concern. As this process goes on for a while, participants create an understanding of the topography of a political issue and they begin to see how various options would or would not be able to navigate that terrain. The more I watch this phenomenon proceed, the less and less relevant Habermas and Rawls become. I am not watching how a series of views fare in the tribunal of public reason; I am watching how a public develops an understanding that it could not create if everyone tried to reason alone.

Brown: Let me bring this back to your own intellectual development. You noted in an earlier piece I read that, having attended a graduate school of public policy, you “quickly learned that public policy did not refer to policy made by the public but rather policy made by an elite cadre of experts.”

McAfee: Yes, I entered public policy school with an astonishing naiveté. I thought I was coming to learn what policy would be like if it were developed in some kind of public fashion — and this was long before I came in contact with the folks at the Kettering Foundation! Within two weeks I realized, to my chagrin, that this program was about policy that is made *for* the public, not in any sense at all *by* the public. Now, after all these years, I wonder how one might seriously discuss, in a policy school, creating a more *public* policy.

I think it might be tied to something Daniel Yankelovich once said to me in an interview: “any policy that is not based on public will is based on sand.” How right that is. This insight provides a completely pragmatic reason to find ways to tie policy-making to what philosophers call “public will formation.” Only a public that has worked through the costs and consequences of an option will be willing to support a policy direction — and pay for it in all its aspects — over the long haul.

I think if Hillary Clinton had realized this she wouldn’t have tried to devise a health care policy behind closed doors, “safely”

“Any policy that is not based on public will is based on sand.”

away from the political process. She would have been much better off trying to get the whole nation talking about health care options, figuring out what direction to go when we cannot have it all. If we have to give something up — a little free enterprise on the part of drug companies and health care providers or



new medicines for rare diseases, or whatever else — what are we willing to forego? Hillary Clinton couldn't decide that for the public, and the public wasn't going to go for a policy unless it had a chance to “work through” the things it entailed.

Brown: In light of what you said, how would you have the academy involved in making policy with the public?

McAfee: First, develop case studies like the Hillary Clinton example showing how the conventional approach does not work. Second, convene more public deliberative forums in conjunction with difficult legislative battles. Third, try to change the culture that sees the public as something to placate or twist in favor of a culture that sees the public as having some kind of wisdom that policymakers need. And, fourth, use the humanities as a way to cultivate the public's ability to reason about ends, values, purpose, all the abilities that go into deliberating well about the kinds of polities we want to become. John Dewey noted that individuals are what they choose. The same goes for communities. The more we cultivate our abilities to think, judge, and choose, the more likely we are to develop sound public policy. So, anyway, I'd have the academy do minor things like that.

Brown: Obviously, with your tongue firmly in cheek, you know that changing the culture is not a minor thing. Where would you start? In academia? And who tries to change that culture and how?

McAfee: The task here is huge, really nothing less than creating a new paradigm of the role of higher education in public life. There is no single way to change a culture and create a new model of the academy. In effect, we're talking about creating a movement. The only kind of universal answer I'm going to give you is

this: Anyone interested in changing the culture should start wherever he or she is. An anthropologist is going to approach things differently from a literary critic, a natural scientist differently from an occupational therapist. And each will see things the others might miss. An administrator will think more about the institution as a whole, where a faculty member may tend to focus more on his or her own research and teaching. If we come at this challenge from multiple standpoints, I think we are better able to get a movement going. I am a philosopher who likes to write, so I start by thinking about the meaning of concepts and how they frame our purposes and I write about these things. Much of my writing is in academia, but I am also fortunate to help edit the *Kettering Review*, so I have a bit of a wider audience as well. And then I am in touch with broader networks of people in other disciplines, in public interest organizations, and in the media. So I can be an advocate with these folks as well. And of course I have the good fortune of teaching college students and serving with colleagues at my university.

In all these arenas, whenever it is appropriate, I like to plant the radical idea that “the people” aren’t dumb, that they might have something to say and to contribute to thinking about how we should run our public lives. When I say things like this in certain company, I can almost hear audible gasps. “What, you would let the people decide?” The most well-meaning, progressive people can have an exceedingly low opinion of the public.

Now, I do understand their caution. Often “the people” can make some terribly stupid judgments. I would count among these my state’s recent public referendum on bilingual education. The people effectively decided to abolish such education and replace it with quick immersion in English. I’m sure critics of bilingual education would say I’m the one who is dumb here; after all, the people spoke and they said, “dump bilingual education.” I’d respond that we did not have a chance to get the public’s intelligence because the public never had a chance to collect it. Voters read about the issue in the paper in an article of about five paragraphs, gathered up their prejudices, and went to the polls, where they consulted their very own experiences and perspectives as they marked the ballot. Had those citizens first consulted others, in some kind of public forums, they might have learned more about aspects of bilingual education than they knew by themselves.

Fortunately, here in New England, at least in the towns of 50,000 people or less, we still conduct much of our public business by town meeting, which is why I think we still have, on the whole, a slightly more enlightened public policy — enlightened by the light of public conversations.

Brown: What other experience, personal and professional, informed your argument that “public knowledge is best created from [a] situated perspective” and that “on matters of public concern the people not only *have* authority but can *be* authorities”?

McAfee: Years ago I helped Jim Fishkin run some deliberative public opinion polls with electric utility companies in Texas and Louisiana. The polls were conducted as part of the policy-making process. The Public Utility Commission requires public input on ways of providing for more electricity before it allows the utility to build a new plant. I was involved in some deliberative polls that were conducted as part of this process. In the one we conducted in west Texas, one of the options the citizens/utility customers considered was whether to go with more renewable energy sources, such as wind power. The conventional wisdom was that the public would never be willing to pay for it; it was much more expensive than other routes and unlikely to be able to provide for all the need there was. But, to all the experts’ surprise, the people deliberating decided that the benefits were worth the cost and that they would be willing to have some portion of their bill targeted for renewables. Now no one would have predicted this. And after the public made its will known, no one was going to question them. If they were willing to pay for it, “great,” said the Public Utility Commission and the electric utility. And now Texas has a far more progressive energy policy than it certainly would have had otherwise.

As for the first part of your question, we did not ask the deliberators in these polls to adopt the impartial, universal perspective that many advocates of deliberative democracy call for. I’m thinking of advocates like Jürgen Habermas and perhaps also John Rawls, Seyla Benhabib, and Joshua Cohen. They think that to deliberate well, people need to move away from their partial,



finite perspectives and only offer reasons and policies that would be acceptable to all those affected by a policy. But in the deliberative forums I've observed, people don't do this. They say, instead, "Here's why I don't like this idea" or "Here's how this option would hurt the people I love" or "Here's what I saw when I visited the Philippines 20 years ago." The other people in the room may have a completely different outlook and may be affected in an entirely different way. But I watch their faces and they are moved by this other person's concerns. I think they actually have a fellow feeling for this other person — it's hard not to do so when you are deliberating with someone — and they want to eventually arrive at a policy that will work for everyone involved. They get to this quasi-universal solution not by adopting an unsituated view from nowhere, but from beginning where they are.

Brown: Noëlle, could you say more here about why the development of "public knowledge" should make room for storytelling?

McAfee: I learned years ago from Joe Julian, who at the time was involved with the National Issues Forums while on the faculty at Syracuse University, that sometimes in a deliberative forum someone might make a flat-out dogmatic or ideological statement that can bring deliberation to a screeching halt, something like the pronouncement, "Taxes are stealing." Where does a moderator go from there? Joe Julian told me that at such moments he would say, "Tell me how you came to hold that view." This request would move the participant from making declarations to telling a story of his or her own experience. This move calls on deliberators to see how their views emerged from a particular history and context; it warns them away from making grand claims that everyone is supposed to accept universally — but hardly ever will — to grounding their views in their own experience.

This approach is completely the opposite of what the Habermasians call for. But it's just what the feminist philosopher Iris Young applauds. Young likes storytelling because it is one of the practices of people who are too often excluded from the public sphere, perhaps people who aren't as schooled in the styles of speech of upper middle-class white America. That's a good reason, but an even better one is that stories move deliberation forward, helping everyone in the room see how even the most foreign views can be the product of recognizable human experience. And it helps people see consequences of policies that they otherwise

might not have anticipated. Storytelling is one of the ways in which deliberators come to have a fuller picture of an issue's political topography.

Brown: In your "Three Models of Democratic Deliberation," you express a preference for an "integrative" model of "what works" rather than "what is true," not what each of us wants but what we, as a public, should do. Do you mean that deliberation is not an idealized process but valued when it actually contributes to the resolution of a public problem?

"Each of us sees a fragment of the whole."

McAfee: I think that in order to come up with a practical way to solve a problem that participants have to get a better picture of the problem. This is what deliberation does for those of us who are finite, partial, imperfect human beings. One philosopher friend of mine likes to caution those who make universal statements like, "this is true" or "this is how it is." He comes back with, "Hey, you occupy one small corner of the world; you can't possibly know 'how it is.'" Each of us sees a fragment of the whole. Deliberation with others helps us to integrate multiple fragments into a more comprehensive picture that might ultimately allow us to come up with a direction that might work. Ultimately, isn't that why people come together — not because they see themselves as budding epistemologists trying to discover "the truth" but rather as political beings trying to discover a better way of living with others?

Brown: Well said. In that same piece, you note that "The integrative model begins from the standpoint that each person is already inclined toward the others ... and it alone explains why people are motivated to deliberate with others in the first place." Why is such an assumption so controlling from your point of view? Is your "inclined toward ... others" a dimension of human behavior that you think Rawls and Habermas largely ignore?

McAfee: I think both Rawls and Habermas are very aware that we live in a world with others and they see that politics is about our being with others. Habermas goes further in understanding that even the process of individuation, coming to be a self, is a social process. In fact, our constitution of ourselves as individuals is something we perform by addressing others. The meaning of these addresses is not the propositional content of our statements, but the performative intention: Heed me for I am someone who should be heeded. That said, I still think these philosophers do not appreciate how fundamental is our connection with others.

One of my favorite philosophers is Emmanuel Levinas, who in his works shows how our very sense of self is not something that precedes our relationship with others but is something that is called up as a response to others. “I” is something that results from encountering the face of vulnerable others. When I see the face of another human being, I see someone who is mortal and vulnerable and this experience calls me to respond, to care for the other. In a way, my subjectivity is my subjection to the other, my need to respond, which is infinite. To be a subject, an “I,” is to be someone who responds to others. I think many of us experience this most deeply when we become a parent, an experience that forever changes one’s identity and gives us a task that is infinite. Parenthood is the height of a phenomenon that was in place all along, though. What I am trying to describe is what I see as the human condition, always at bottom a condition of being in relation with others, a relationship that calls me to respond to and act for the others in my world. I think we are so immersed in these facts that we fail to see them, but they are quite observable when they are missing. Think of how unsettling it is to interact with someone who lacks the ability to respond with any affect or emotions, say someone with Asperger’s Syndrome. Or recall Mr. Spock from the old “Star Trek” series. We knew Spock was *alien* because he could not fathom or respond to the emotional vulnerability of those about him — never mind those pointy ears.

Brown: In your essay “What’s Feminist about Democratic Theory?” you acknowledge the personal and intellectual journey that you have made since leaving Washington, D.C., 15 years ago —

I set myself the problem of figuring out whether and how finite, partial, imperfect people could ever be democratic. I was very wary, which is why I left D.C., but now I find that I might one day be able to return.

Are you encouraged about the prospects for your “integrative model?”

McAfee: Oh, please don’t call it “my” model. I’m just naming something I see at work: a widespread dissatisfaction with what “democracy” and “democratization” usually means; a return in the humanities and sciences to the approach to public life offered by the American pragmatists, especially Dewey; a sense that no solution will work unless it emerges from a public understanding of an issue; an appreciation for the importance of social bonds and norms of

cooperation.

When I was working in Washington, D.C., during the late 1980s, my job was to garner widespread public support for the “good” positions my organization advocated. But “the public” seemed to be a complete phantom. I seemed to spend my energy manufacturing a phantom public and its support, generating letters to Congress, drumming up public outrage over the nefarious dealings of moneyed interests. No matter how much right and goodness we had on our side, I grew tired of this charade. Now I think a lot of other people were growing weary, too, because during that very same time citizens across the country and around the world started thinking about how to generate a real public will and legitimate state of affairs. Theorists started catching up with their theories of civil society and deliberative democracy. Some people in the news media are starting to pay a bit of attention, though hardly enough.

So, now, if I were back in Washington, I’d know that the public is not a phantom. It is a phenomenon that can be — and is, more often than we realize — generated by a set of public ideas, occasions for public deliberation, and institutions through which the public can find itself.

Brown: Thank you, Noëlle.

BRINGING DEMOCRACY TO HEALTH CARE: A UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

By Douglas Scutchfield, Carol Ireson, and Laura Hall

Higher education institutions have historically been a catalyst for teaching and facilitating democracy and the art of effective dialogue. This has traditionally been done by enlightening and training students who would be future leaders and engaged citizens. A renewal process is under way to take democratic thoughts and action off-campus and into communities in need of assistance around key social issues. David Mathews of the Kettering Foundation suggests that colleges and universities have the task of positioning themselves in the public sphere, going beyond traditional teaching, by providing services that will build democracy in communities. At the end of the twentieth century, the American Education Council observed democracy weakening and convened a group of academicians to propose new ways to increase citizen deliberation and participation in public life. Universities are now exploring innovative ways to make democracy possible in communities through building social capital and civic engagement. Peter Levine, of the University of Maryland's Institute for Philosophy & Public Life, challenges academicians to no longer approach community engagement as "public intellectuals" but as citizens with special skills and a shared interest in improving society.

Historically, academic centers have worked with communities only in very specific forms, such as agricultural extension services and related entities. One area typically overlooked, but desperately needed is an emphasis on public health. The role of higher education in improving the public's health has a relatively short history compared to higher education's role in other forms of public life. In this relatively new approach, academicians and communities are now joining together to define research questions, determine how to gather the data, and decide what actions to take after the information is gathered.

This article illustrates an effective relationship, built on university expertise and active community involvement, resulting in a

positive program. The authors are staff of the University of Kentucky (UK) and its Center for Health Services Management and Research (CHSMR). The story of our partnership with the Green River district of Kentucky represents a case study from which some generalizations can be drawn to assist others in consideration of such a partnership and collaborative engagement.

Daviess County, with approximately 91,000 residents, is one of seven counties comprising the Green River Area Development District (GRADD), an area of approximately 206,000 residents. The GRADD is organized as a district health department and is served by two hospitals in Kentucky, Owensboro Mercy — a 553-bed hospital formed as the result of a merger of a public and private hospital in the community, and Henderson Methodist Hospital, a 190-bed facility in Henderson, Kentucky. Daviess County and several of the Green River counties lay along the Ohio river. Directly across the Ohio river and served by a bridge between them is Evansville, Indiana, with two hospitals to serve that community and southern Indiana.

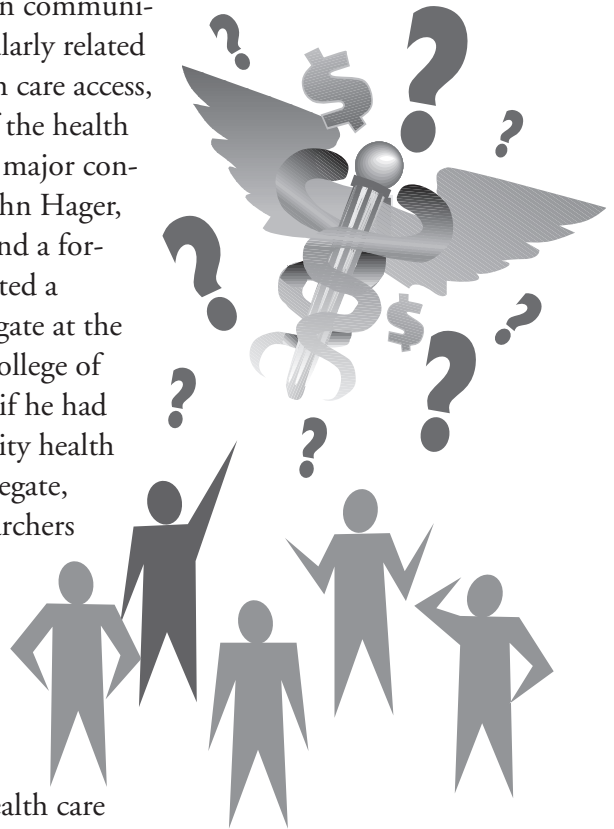
Beginning the Process of Community Engagement

In 1996, the city of Owensboro's major family-owned newspaper, the *Messenger Inquirer* was sold to a large chain. The paper's previous owner used the proceeds to establish a not-for-profit corporation, The Public Life Foundation Organization (PLFO), focused on Daviess County and the community of Owensboro, the county seat. The PLFO was founded on the belief that "citizens, fully informed and engaged, can make the difference that improves the quality of public decisions." The PLFO actualizes its mission by gathering data, organizing groups and public forums, and assisting citizens to take action. The PLFO functions within a belief that information added to deliberation results in positive community action.

Based on findings from a public opinion poll that the public was dissatisfied with their level of involvement in local decision making, the PLFO took several major steps to increase citizen engagement in public life. The PLFO began its efforts by supporting the attendance of a cadre of leaders at a major educational program run by the Kettering Foundation. There, those leaders learned about the public issues forum notion and the importance of deliberative democracy and public dialogue in "naming and framing" major community issues for solution.

In 1998, the PLFO also contracted with Doble Research Associates, a consulting firm specializing in analyzing public opinion from a nonpartisan perspective, to come to the community and conduct focus groups about issues that the community should address. The key issue identified by the focus groups was the lack of involvement of citizens in community decision making, particularly related to health care issues. Health care access, cost of care, and distrust of the health care system emerged as the major concerns of the community. John Hager, the founder of the PLFO and a former journalist, then contacted a colleague, Dr. James Applegate at the University of Kentucky's College of Communications, to learn if he had any experience in community health needs assessment. Dr. Applegate, who had worked with researchers at our CHSMR on other projects, approached the three of us about responding to the invitation of the PLFO. We were intrigued by the idea of getting ordinary citizens involved in health care decisions and developed a proposal for working with the community in the process.

We first organized a town hall meeting of key stakeholders in Owensboro to discuss the potential for collecting data that could be used to identify issues in health care for that community. Following the town hall meeting several organizations expressed interest in the idea of having data to assist the communities when "working through" ideas and indicated a willingness to provide financial support for the work. A total of 24 partners, including the hospitals, United Way, county fiscal courts, two other community foundations, the health department and the mental health center offered support. Representatives from some of the partners and other community leaders formed a community health group who worked with our researchers to guide the early work of the project.



The next step was to identify citizens from the segment of the community most affected by lack of health care to participate in a series of focus groups that would help us understand the issues from their perspective. We worked closely with a registered nurse from the local health department who served as a liaison to contact potential participants, find accessible locations, and arrange transportation for participants. All five focus groups directed preliminary attention specifically to health care access issues.

Naming the Hard Issues

Using the information from focus groups and with guidance of major community stakeholders, we designed a 91-item questionnaire organized around the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Healthy People 2010 framework and Kentucky's companion document, Healthy Kentucky 2010. That 91-item instrument contained questions on demographics, health status, disease burden, health behaviors, health care access, and insurance. The questionnaire was administered to 1,720 community respondents using a random digit dial process. We also surveyed 281 physicians practicing in the Green River area, specifically about health care access and the health status of their patients. In addition, we conducted interviews with a number of non-physician patient-care providers in the area, including pharmacists, mental health professionals, long-term and home health providers. These data were supplemented by an analysis of secondary data previously collected by others, i.e., Kentucky Health Interview survey, the statewide Behavioral Risk Factor Survey, and Kentucky Department of Public Health, for comparison information on the area's disease burden, health behavior, and access.

In 2000, findings from the surveys and secondary data analysis were presented at an open community meeting attended by more than 250 citizens. A series of smaller meetings to review the findings were also held with interested stakeholders. In addition, reports were generated for the Green River Area Development District with county specific reports for Daviess County and Henderson County. The community was concerned about its elderly and the health problems they were experiencing, so a major report was generated on those in Green River more than 65 years of age. Selected findings from the study were published in the local newspapers to keep the community informed.

Two major issues emerged as barriers to health for the community, unhealthy lifestyles and access to health care. Smoking, breast and cervical cancer screening, poor nutrition, and sedentary lifestyles came out as potential priorities in the area of health behaviors. In the health care access area, the priorities were a shortage of primary care physicians and the large number of eligible children who did not apply for coverage under the state health insurance programs (KCHIP).

Shortly after the release of the results, the PLFO, in partnership with the university and our CHSMR researchers, moved to the next step of supplementing the facts with the public's insight. The PLFO established The People's Health Project, to bring the information from the UK study to the citizens for deliberation and ultimately prepare them for action. The PLFO targeted access to health care, as others in the community, e.g., Green River Health Department, were addressing the other major issue, unhealthy lifestyles.

Toward a Public Voice

In collaboration with the executive director of the PLFO, we developed an issues booklet that summarized key findings from the study and presented these in a manner that was understandable by the average citizen. The booklet identified the issues and raised questions about what the community, health care providers, and citizens could do to improve health care. We planned a series of community forums of ordinary citizens and recruited moderators and recorders to facilitate deliberation. Moderators and recorders were trained for the public forums. Citizens from all sectors of the community and all walks of life were recruited to participate in the process on naming and framing issues. A total of 52 public forums were held in a variety of sites from senior centers to schools, churches, and colleges over an 11-month period. The well-advertised forums were open to the public and typically lasted 2-3 hours. Participants were asked to give personal data so that we could track attendees' demographics. We added forums to target groups that were



underrepresented and to ensure that the mix of participants represented the community profile. For example, nearing the end of the 11 months we discovered that young adults had not been involved, so additional forums were held at the local community college.

All 578 participants received the booklet with the information about the 7 health care access issues. Each forum began with deliberative discussions of the data about the seven health care access issues. Additional health issues raised by participants were also discussed. The lively discussions were recorded, with the knowledge of the participants, and trained recorders kept notes of the proceedings. During the discussion, participants shared their personal stories and those of friends and family. Different groups brought up different issues. Many participants cited the inability to find a primary care provider. The physicians, on the other hand, did not think there were too few primary care providers.

At the end of the forum, participants ranked the priorities and identified potential solutions on a written questionnaire. The recordings, notes, and questionnaires produced rich data that were analyzed by the CHSMR researchers using qualitative and statistical methods. The problems — in the public's terms — that emerged from the deliberations included:

- Health care costs are too high;
- Everyone needs a physician or a medical home;
- Gaps in the health care system need to be filled;
- The health care system could be more consumer-friendly;
- Respect for the individual is important; and
- Funds already exist in the system to fix many problems.

Other themes not included in the discussion booklet emerged repeatedly and represented powerful perceptions of citizens about health care. These themes included:

- Lack of competition among providers and insurers;
- Abuse of the emergency department;
- Poor health habits;
- Problems with getting information about health care access to those in need;

- Lack of funding and staff to address the needs of the uninsured;
- Too much paperwork; and
- Appreciation of services provided.

The citizen participants not only named the priority issues, they also recommended many solutions including:

- Getting people into health care programs they qualify for;
- Providing help to the uninsured and people receiving Medicaid and Medicare with filling-out paperwork;
- Making sure doctors, clinics, and hospitals do not overcharge;
- Promoting and supporting more and better health insurance plans offered by employers;
- Helping patients find a regular doctor or medical home;
- Expanding transportation services to and from the doctor's office;
- Making it easier for doctors to distribute free prescriptions; and
- Recruiting more primary care doctors.

The rich discussion points were further developed and the resulting themes and perceptions published in a report from the center. We collaborated with a professional journalist on a final “consumer-friendly” report for the community, *All Is Not Well: Citizens Speak Out About Health Care in Daviess County*.

Public-Acting

Our work with the community of Owensboro and Daviess County stimulated several positive actions and others are ongoing. A directory of providers in the community — including their office hours, whether they are taking new patients, and whether they are accepting new Medicaid patients — has been published. This will be a help to those seeking a medical home. The Daviess County Judge-Executive recognized the health needs of the community and, as a result, the fiscal court adopted a resolution calling for a goal of 100% access and zero health disparities. One of our

researchers provided assistance to the county in obtaining federal funding to expand the health department's physical space, including a new primary care clinic. The County Judge-Executive is examining whether it might be possible to duplicate the successful models from other communities in an effort to address this issue. The hospital has hired a full-time physician for a local free clinic. Numerous community actions related to healthy lifestyles point to the recognition of personal responsibility for health care. Perhaps the most important outcome, however, is the formation of the Citizens' Health Care Advocates. This group, composed of forum participants who understand and support democratic dialogue, has come together to advocate health care for all. They are a citizens' group committed to maintaining community dialogue, deliberations by citizens, and assuring a community voice in health-related decisions by the community.



Every Community Is Different

Every community is different, but there are important steps in the process of developing a public voice that are applicable to multiple environments. Our university-community partnership produced valuable lessons that can guide future endeavors aimed at engaging citizens to improve a community's health. Traditionally, efforts to improve the health of a community focused solely on collecting data to be used exclusively by health-related groups in the community. Local citizens had no access to the information and no involvement in health-related decisions. Consequently, decisions were not well understood by the average citizens. The importance of engaging citizens in a deliberative process to humanize the data cannot be overstated. Issues that are statistically significant may not be the top priority for local citizens and solutions developed by the health care community may not resonate with the citizens who use them.

For a successful partnership, it is crucial that the convener of the partnership be a neutral but engaged participant in the life of the local community. As convener, the PLFO solicited the support of 24 other community agencies and facilitated the

connection between the university, the health care community, and the citizens of the county. Even with a neutral convener, a participatory community-based approach to community health improvement can be fraught with politics. The leadership of various local groups may be reluctant to give up decision-making authority about health issues to ordinary citizens. The process of civic engagement and deliberation presents a new role for the average citizen and they may need assistance in providing input. Training local citizens as facilitators to lead focus groups and community forums enhances the potential for citizen participation.

To be successful in their deliberations, citizens need facts. The essential key to giving citizens a voice is to arm them with data that has been transformed into meaningful information. Only then can the deliberative and reasoned process of naming and framing issues occur. The public media is an important mechanism for generating interest in the health care access issues and communicating “facts” to the broader public. Citizens were motivated by the stories reported in the newspaper to tell their stories, thus enriching the picture of health care access issues.

David Mathews says that reaching a decision through public deliberation changes the way people relate to one another and ways of relating in decision making carries over into ways that citizens act publicly. New understandings about the way others view issues are developed and these carry over to new ways of relating as citizens. Clearly, the People’s Health Project brought together citizens who had never heard the plights of their fellow citizens and the listening created a new level of empathy.

Our university-community partnership was an ongoing iterative process with the university gathering information about the community, providing information back to the community and, in turn, the community deciding what information they need from the university. The People’s Health Project did result in several potential solutions to the community’s health care needs, but the importance of developing a public voice far outweighs solving one problem.

THE WORK OF “PUBLIC-MAKING”

An interview with Douglas Challenger

Recently, Douglas Challenger stepped down as the founding director of the New England Center for Civic Life after five years of helping make the center an effective resource for students and communities in New Hampshire and the larger New England region. Challenger has returned to full-time teaching at Franklin Pierce College where he has been a professor of sociology since 1992. David Brown, coeditor of the Higher Education Exchange, asked Professor Challenger to reflect on this experience and what he learned.

Brown: Parker Palmer once told me that social activists often affirm community to counteract their natural “loner” preferences. Would Parker’s insight have any application in your case?

Challenger: Definitely. I also have a strong apolitical streak, too. So, I guess in my case, the old saying fits me well that *we teach what we most need to learn.*

Brown: I like that....

Challenger: One of the reasons I went into sociology years ago was to try to figure out a healthy perspective about the nature of the self and its relationship to community and society. My dissertation, which was later published as a book entitled *Durkheim Through the Lens of Aristotle: Durkheimian, Postmodernist, and Communitarian Responses to the Enlightenment*, was an argument for the virtues of community and civic engagement that I saw woven throughout the work of Emile Durkheim and Aristotle, themes that were at the center of theoretical debates between communitarians and liberals in the 1980s and 1990s. I tried to show that Durkheim had restated many of Aristotle’s ideas for modern times. Writing that theoretical dissertation set the stage for my getting involved with the practices of deliberative dialogue these last five years. I saw deliberative democracy as a synthesis of sorts of the political philosophy of liberalism and the communitarian critique of it.

Founding the New England Center for Civic Life (NECCL) and teaching the practices of dialogue and deliberation to students and community leaders was also a way to bring theory and prac-

tice together. I had long admired and taught the ideals of the classical view of politics that I read about in Aristotle — a politics of the common good — but didn't see it happening or even encouraged to any great degree in the real world. "Politics as usual" turns me off, for the most part, as it does many people. What I saw in the National Issues Forums (NIF) was a way to bring those classical ideals to life in some practical way in today's society. And this was why I got involved originally, first as a volunteer in my town and school district, and then professionally as a kind of ambassador for citizen deliberation in higher education and across the region through establishing the New England Center for Civic Life.

I developed lots of new associates and colleagues on and off campus. In the early years, we had the support of many staff, full- and part-time faculty members at Franklin Pierce College. We also developed a network of colleagues interested in deliberative dialogue in schools and communities across the state. On our original steering committee, we had representatives from public television and radio, community organizations, local and state government, the state humanities council, higher education organizations and institutions, and public schools. Over time, we developed joint projects with almost all of these organizations and established a reputation for the New England Center for Civic Life as an honest broker of public deliberation in New Hampshire.

All of this work helped improve the image of our college and began to earn a place for it as a leader in civic education and community-building. Our annual workshops attracted adults from communities from several states in the region and we became known as a place where you could learn the National Issues Forums approach to civic dialogue. We established connections with other fellow travelers in community dialogue such as the Study Circles Resource Center and with other higher education institutes that were dedicated to civic education and community-building. We became a part of the National Issues Forums network and participated in workshops with people doing similar work from across the country and around the world through our association with the Kettering Foundation and had opportunities to be involved in national projects associated with NIF. And we attracted thousands of dollars in grants from the Hewlett Foundation and from national and state agencies that found our work valuable and important.

Brown: I would like to know more about the story of your “public-making” work at the college. In your *HEX* 2002 piece with Joni Doherty, you emphasized a “kind of citizenship that requires us as scholars to stand *with* the public and to regard our students and ordinary citizens as cocreators of the public realm.” Has it worked out that way?

Challenger: In recent years, about a half-dozen or so of us really tried to work with the local community of Rindge on a college/community project designed to help the town deliberate about its future. In that project, we found that standing *with* other adult members of the public was difficult.

Brown: Why?

Challenger: We were all playing facilitator roles of one sort or another and that put us more in the observer or moderator role and made it difficult for us to be coparticipants in the community deliberations. It also didn't help that none of us live in Rindge, the town where the college is located. But, regardless of that, I think we still would have been hampered to some degree because our involvement was as “professionals” serving the community with our expertise in community-building processes and dialogue, rather than strictly as coparticipants.

Brown: Shifting the focus of your work in Rindge to your own campus, what problems did you encounter there?

Challenger: It has been even more difficult to break out of our professional roles with students. One thing that became more apparent over the years of engaging students in public issue forums on campus was that students — especially the younger ones — lacked enough basic knowledge of the issue to participate meaningfully. The students seemed frustrated by this themselves. As faculty, we saw that certain prerequisites were needed for deliberation to work well, and one of those was basic knowledge and history regarding the issue.

As a professor, there is a tension between wanting to teach about a particular subject matter that you have a degree of expertise in, on the one hand, and the desire to provide students with an opportunity to deliberate and make public policy decisions, on the other. We have learned that it is important to keep these two educational impulses separate. It is exciting pedagogically, though, to shift back and forth between these two kinds of educational activities. But for it to work well, one has to be careful not to try to teach in a forum. This was harder to learn than you might think and some of us are still learning.

“It has been even more difficult to break out of our professional roles with students.”

An example of this tension always springs to mind. One of my faculty colleagues who was helping to moderate a forum on U.S.-China Relations could not resist switching into a teaching and advocacy mode when he listened through most of the forum to students talking about China without any knowledge of that country's human rights abuses and occupation of Tibet. Toward the end of the forum, he broke into a brief lecture that he thought was absolutely necessary and finished it off by writing on the flip chart an address for a "Free Tibet" Web site. We laugh about that moment now, but at the time it happened, it was frustrating for him as well as for the students who were trying to express their views.

Brown: Can anything be done, other than "teaching" in a forum, to address the lack of background and knowledge of the participants? Do forums not work otherwise?

Challenger: One idea we had to address this problem was to hold a special lecture or other educational activity the week before a series of forums took place where a professor or some other expert could provide some important background and knowledge related to the upcoming forum issue. Beyond this, we try to encourage classroom teachers who require their students to attend campus forums to prepare their students as much as possible in class before they send them and to use the forum experience as a place to apply knowledge already gained about the issue. These two things seem to help somewhat.

Forums still work, however, when the students lack background on the issue. They can and do learn about an issue in a forum from the discussion guide and those participants who are more experienced and informed. Participants are especially affected and appreciate learning from each other's life experience through the comments of others and stories that people tell in forums. Many often change their attitudes about others or their perspective on an issue as a result of such interaction, which deliberative dialogue makes possible. But this goes only so far. There is still the need to look beyond one's individual experience and even the collective experience of a group assembled together in forum.

This is the traditional role of education — to teach people something they don't already know or have not yet drawn forth from within themselves. It is as important to their civic education as learning to reason together and communicate effectively through dialogue and deliberation. Without a broader education gained through academic and/or years of life experience, the

quality of any deliberation is diminished. I have a renewed respect for the role that teaching the liberal arts can have in the civic education of students, especially when taught in a profound, radical, and integrated way. One of my mentors at Syracuse University — Ralph Ketcham — wrote and spoke often about the liberal arts as the better part of civic education and I have always found his view very compelling.

Brown: Tell me more about Ketcham’s influence on you.

Challenger: Ralph Ketchum is a wonderfully gifted teacher and scholar of political thought. He taught me the classical notion of politics. I learned from him Aristotle’s definition of civic virtue — governing with the interests of the whole in mind instead of from your own interest or the special interest of some group. Ralph was always talking about Joseph Tussman’s notion of the “office of the citizen,” too. In a

democracy where, at least theoretically, the citizens rule, we each hold an important office, different from those held by elected officials only in *degree*, but not in *kind*. This, Ralph thought, was why civic virtue was so important to teach and learn. Democracy was best served, Ralph believed, by teaching the ethical disposition to make policy decisions from the perspective of the public interest. As Aristotle said, this is what we mean by a “good” political leader in any culture or historical time, or under any kind of state, whether it is a government by the one (monarchy), the few (aristocracy), or the many (democracy). If *self-government* is to be *good government*, Ralph taught, its citizens and leaders need to cultivate in themselves the universally recognized virtue of the wise and good leader.

Brown: Overall, what have you learned about the practice of “deliberation” as your work has progressed?

Challenger: I have become more sensitive to what I think are the preconditions of *good* deliberation. One of those is a broad and integrated knowledge of the issue and its systemic as well as personal, experiential dimensions. Another is the need to have real diversity represented in the forum. It’s not enough to imagine the perspective and experience of people unlike ourselves and to talk for them. They really need to be in the room. A forum on gay



“It’s not enough to imagine the perspective and experience of people unlike ourselves and to talk for them.”

marriage, for example, really needs to have gay people present and speaking, or the forum will turn out to be either a recitation of our standard prejudices or a litany of inch-deep politically correct perspectives, depending on who's there and more vocal.

And perhaps the most important precondition to good deliberation is the moral disposition of public virtue — the willingness on the part of the participants to try to identify and support what is good for the whole and not just for oneself or some constituency. When this is not present it can really thwart the purposes of deliberation. Protecting or promoting one's self-interests is deeply corrupting and has a tendency to cause people to either respond the same way or to withdraw from participating altogether. I had hoped that the deliberative dialogue ground rules and the issue framework — the mechanics of this kind of discourse — would've been enough to lead people to be public-spirited in their participation. But I don't believe these mechanisms alone are sufficient. It's not enough to concentrate only on the *practices* of deliberation. We must also emphasize the *normative* qualities that need to accompany those practices if deliberation is to really lead to good results.

Asking the American public or Congress about what to do about race in the 1950s would not have gotten civil rights legislation passed. Progress in civil rights then and now comes about through the moral arguments and activism of advocates who are driven not by finding common ground as much as they are by the desire to get the country to do what's *right*. Law and public policy follow, once spiritual leaders and other moral entrepreneurs have been successful in applying pressure through their witness, agitation, education, lobbying, and legal challenges based on appeals to a higher law than public judgment grounded in the principles of justice that they find intuitively compelling and/or embedded in the Constitution and our other Founding documents. Because I believe “the arm of the world is bent toward justice,” I think advocacy that is in line with moral goodness is what really



changes society for the better. Communities and their considered opinions are not unqualified goods — they can be suffocating to liberty and can lead to promoting and maintaining all kinds of bigotry and harm to individuals. In other words, I have come to realize how important attention to justice and goodness is if participation and democracy are to bring us all they promise.

There is a lot of talk about citizenship and leadership at our college — we even have a slogan that we say defines our mission in part. We say we are teaching students to be *leaders of conscience*. But the devil is in the details. I always thought that teaching our students deliberative skills was a way to give that educational goal substance. It seemed to me to be one of the best ways to help people develop public virtue — an interest in and some ability to identify along with others, the common good. A better answer to American individualism than what the communitarians were saying about returning to common beliefs and values, it seemed to me, was to ground our community-building and political practice on both the *norms* of public virtue and the *practices* of dialogue and deliberation. This, I believed, was more appropriate to a modern, pluralistic society and what was most needed in the liberal character-forming agenda.

Brown: Was this born out in your campus diversity project? As I understand, your provost considered it a success. What were her measures for that conclusion?

Challenger: There are hundreds of anecdotes that indicate the success of this program, many of which are recorded in an hourlong documentary video on this project that we produced a few years ago entitled “The Difference Deliberative Dialogue Makes.” Over the last four years, students have said, for example, that the deliberative dialogue forums held on campus regularly as part of this project are among their best educational experiences during their whole college career at Franklin Pierce College. But our provost was most persuaded, I believe, by some data collected recently by our office of institutional research. The research indicates that according to national college student surveys, our students show significant increases in their understanding and tolerance of those differing in race and ethnicity. Those same surveys also indicate that our students show significantly higher rates of tolerance and understanding of diversity than do students at our peer institutions. And finally, I would think she would have to be impressed (and grateful) by the fact that there have been no other major incidents of racial conflict on our campus like the

“We say we are teaching students to be leaders of conscience. But the devil is in the details.”

ones the college experienced before we began our Diversity and Community Project almost five years ago.

Brown: You noted in your *HEX* 2002 piece: “The most difficult hurdles involved in doing this kind of work have to do with the way it challenges cherished notions within academic culture.” Could you say more about what “cherished notions” you encountered at your college?

Challenger: The biggest “cherished notion” that I encountered is the faculty’s identification with being experts in their specialized fields. This can be an obstacle to teaching and modeling public deliberation as a civic skill because public problem solving is ultimately about collective moral reasoning, once the important facts are on the table. I found that many professors (as well as other civic professionals like journalists, public policy analysts, nonprofit organizational leaders) don’t see this distinction between facts and values very clearly. Often it is the case that they think the answer to policy dilemmas is more education and information, better facts and evidence. This, they believe, will lead people to the necessary conclusions that will dictate the right policy positions or courses of action.

This belief is related to another cherished notion in academia — the idea that science and empirical investigation alone can solve our public problems. While we are indeed helped enormously by scientific knowledge, public policy creation is ultimately not a science, and political decisions, including those made by judges that influence law and policy, are not purely objective or value-free either. But we resist this fact. Acknowledging that would mean that our decisions are on less objective grounds than we like to think. It would make us realize that we are ultimately making *ethical* decisions (hopefully, informed ones) in the public realm and that we ought to be giving more thought to how that is best done. The practices of deliberative democracy are an essential remedy for this condition, not the misuse of science.

Brown: What happened when you proposed to the faculty union and the college administration that new faculty roles and rewards should be created to support community outreach?

Challenger: I proposed to both the union executive committee and the college administration that we should create new faculty categories (besides the traditional categories of associate professor, assistant professor, adjunct professor, instructor, etc.) to be written into the next labor contract. Specifically, I asked

“These new categories would open up opportunities for more professors to do public work....”

them to recognize the categories of “institute director” and “nonteaching full- and part-time faculty” as employment roles at the college. I defined these positions as ones where a significant portion of time was devoted to the educational work of running a community-building project outside the classroom either on or off campus. In one sense, I was asking them to officially acknowledge what was actually already the case for myself and a few others who were devoting a great deal of time to running special programs like the Diversity and Community Project of the New England Center for Civic Life. I saw the inclusion of these new employment roles in the labor contract as necessary to legitimate and institutionalize the new “public work” that had evolved at the college under the previous academic administration, but that had never been officially and formally endorsed. These new categories would open up opportunities for more professors to do public work, if they were so inclined. This seemed essential to me if more than a few of us were to get involved. Establishing them might also have diminished, over time, the sense of unfairness among some faculty that stemmed from the exceptions that were being made in the job descriptions of the few of us who were being given what seemed to them, no doubt, special treatment.

I also believed these new categories might be useful for the college to gradually hire future faculty who would split their time between teaching and research or project administration. All this would have led to a more flexible definition and evaluation of work that I believed would have enlivened the institution, as it would have provided an incentive for more entrepreneurial energy among the faculty and would have stimulated their creativity to develop promising new initiatives that could be manageably integrated into their work lives for which they would also be paid. But these new employment categories represented a change in the institution that many in both the faculty union executive committee and the college administration were unwilling to endorse. Unsure of what the future consequences of such a change might be, neither the faculty nor administrative negotiators wanted to champion such controversial new definitions of work at the college.

Brown: Looking back, what did this mean?

Challenger: Looking back, I now see this as one of the defining moments of our effort to affect the institutional change that I thought was necessary for public scholarship to become a more central and legitimate endeavor for faculty, especially full-

time faculty. For several years leading up to this moment, a small group of my colleagues and I had tried to build a case for this kind of work and to demonstrate its value for our college and our students to our colleagues and administrators. During those years, three academic institutes with community outreach missions were developed (NECCL was one of them).

But subsequently, over the last two years, it has been extremely difficult to know whether or not a newly appointed provost would continue to support these young community outreach-oriented institutes and centers, which had sprung up as controversial experiments at the college. This was due, in part, because she assumed her position with a mandate from our board of trustees to carry out a comprehensive academic and administrative prioritization process that would identify places where college personnel were being spread too thinly and to make appropriate cuts in a number of programmatic areas. This prioritization process was initiated by the trustees in response to suggestions made by our main accreditation organization.

In this new fiduciary environment and under the new academic leadership, the curricular and programmatic environment went from an expanding universe to a shrinking one in a rather brief span of time.

One very tangible way that these new institutes and centers felt this declining support was the demand that the institute directors give up some of their course release time to teach more. This meant that we would have less time to lead our institutes in the manner that we had been operating, and wanted to continue and expand. Course release time in exchange for community outreach work was always controversial at our college. It was only given to a few full-time faculty in exchange for the work they were doing fund raising, developing programs, and directing these community outreach institutes.

With the reprioritization process and phasing out the course relief practice, two of the three founder/directors of the community outreach institutes who were full-time faculty members, (the other institute director was a part-time instructor) and receiving course release time resigned their positions as directors and



“I wanted our college to offer the possibility for more faculty to redefine their professional lives....”

returned to teaching full-time in large part over this issue. I was one of them. We were responding to the pressure to return to the traditional role of teaching.

So, the most important thing has not yet been accomplished — creating the *structural conditions* and *institutional legitimacy* that would enable full-time faculty to more easily and routinely integrate public scholarship into their professional lives.

In fairness, I would say that it was a lot to ask of our administrators (past and present) to institutionalize and financially support the grassroots faculty efforts of these new public scholarship initiatives. It is risky for a small liberal arts college like ours to allow some of its faculty to work on projects outside of the classroom, which didn't always involve students directly.

Brown: From your experience, what distinguishes “public-making” at a liberal arts college from other higher education institutions?

Challenger: There are those who are at land grant schools working in the Cooperative Extension system where public-building fits more easily their institutional practices. The job description of a faculty member in a Cooperative Extension division at a land grant university is much more conducive to public work than is the job description of a professor at a small liberal arts college trying to do similar work. The different institutional contexts and the relative support of the leadership within those contexts can make all the difference.

My efforts at institutional change at our liberal arts college reminded me that a professor's job at such an institution was to teach courses, i.e., to be in the classroom — not in the community. My feeling, though, is that had the administration and board of trustees been willing to move in the direction of making public scholarship more central to the institution and opened up the opportunity structure for such work, a “silent majority” of faculty might have been interested in doing so. However, that “tipping point,” which would have enabled what a small group of professors were pioneering to go more to scale, was never reached.

In retrospect, I sometimes wonder if it wasn't unrealistic and perhaps even inappropriate to ask for such a change. Nevertheless, I wanted our college to offer the possibility for more faculty to redefine their professional lives, if they were so inclined, such that their jobs might take on a much more real, practical, and decidedly public dimension, and not have to save that kind of thing for their “off hours” as volunteers.

On the other hand, other New Hampshire colleges and universities have launched and are fully supporting institutes with similar aims, although not in the distinctive ways that we might have at our college. One of them is at St. Anselm College near Manchester. At the same time that we began the public scholarship institutes at Franklin Pierce they were establishing what has now become the foremost center for politics and civic education in the state called the New Hampshire Institute for Politics. The institute has an entire building devoted to its work, a full-time professional staff and several faculty members working on projects that are both practice-based and scholarly. It is a real example of what faculty and administrators can accomplish together when they share a vision and are both willing to give it their commitment and support.

Brown: When we talked last summer, you mentioned briefly about pursuing your interests in art, music, and drama. Tell me more about them and how you accommodate them with everything else you are doing.

Challenger: I have been learning to play the fiddle over the last two years. I was in my first play last summer — Shakespeare’s delightful comedy *Twelfth Night*. And this semester, I have been taking an acting class on campus and drawing and painting lessons at a local arts and crafts school. I find each of these activities inspiring and deeply satisfying in ways I never would have imagined.

It has been difficult to make space for them because I am teaching much more (and enjoying it more, interestingly enough) now that I am no longer the director of NECCL. I don’t quite know, at this point, how to get more time for these activities. I’m in the beginning stages of a change where I am committing more time to these pursuits. I’m sure as they get integrated more into my life, it will become clearer how better to accommodate them.

I read something the Dalai Lama said recently that resonates with me about all this. He said, in his thoughts for the new millennium, “Remember that not getting what you want is sometimes a wonderful stroke of luck.” As time goes by, I can see what he means.

Brown: Thank you, Doug.

BETTER TOGETHER

— Robert Putnam, Lewis M. Feldstein, and Don Cohen

Kelvin Lawrence, Reviewer

In his 1994 book, *Bowling Alone*, political scientist Robert Putnam described the decline of social capital in the United States. He described social capital as the “social networks, norms of reciprocity, mutual assistance, and trustworthiness” that may exist in a community.

In *Better Together*, Putnam, along with Lewis M. Feldstein, and Don Cohen have collected twelve examples of participatory initiatives that demonstrate exceptions to this trend of decline. These examples can “guide and inspire” those who are seeking to develop social capital in their own localities. To fend off criticism from the methodologically rigorous standards of academic discourse, they warn early on that the book is “not a textbook of social-capital creation or a casebook designed to elucidate or test a particular theory of social-capital development,” but merely an attempt to identify some ways that people are making progress in real situations. To that end, *Better Together* is an overwhelming success, though it does tend to describe, at times explicitly, a handful of concepts and ideas that might be interpreted as a set of necessary but not sufficient conditions that should be incorporated in social-capital development.

One of the most striking characteristics of *Better Together* is the astounding diversity of projects examined. Some began with an overtly political mission; such as the Valley Interfaith, Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI), Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers (HUCTW), and Portland, Oregon’s neighborhood associations.

Other chapters deal with activities that are not traditionally considered political, or even instances in which building a sense of togetherness would be thought of as necessary. Chicago’s libraries, the Do Something school leadership program, a youth mentoring activity for elderly people called Experience Corps, and the United Parcel Service (UPS) have many differences, but share in common that each group had nonpolitical goals and had to make decisions cooperatively to achieve these goals. These organizations all “discovered” social-capital formation along the way.

Still another set of stories involves efforts that explicitly set out to develop a sense of community. The Shipyard Project in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Saddleback Church, economic development in Tupelo, Mississippi, and the Web site Craigslist.org, all had community-building as their central purpose. However, these efforts all had differing definitions of “community” and different reasons for wanting strong social capital.

In each of the politically driven cases, the organizations involved were engaged in traditional political battles or organizing efforts. Valley Interfaith, for example, began as an effort to involve parents in an economically disadvantaged area of Texas in their local school. It grew, however, to encompass the infrastructure and economic development of the entire area, with extensive participation and ownership of the problems and process by local residents.

Similarly, in the DSNI and HUCTION examples, there was a commitment to place decision making in the hands of the people concerned with and affected by the problem. This was an alternative approach to traditional efforts at organizing a neighborhood improvement association and a labor union, respectively. These groups refused to allow professional organizers and activists to make decisions in the interest of others.

In Portland, the level of activism in the city was so intense that the municipal government established an Office of Neighborhood Associations. The story here demonstrates much more than a city government responding to a handful of rabble-rousers; the Office of Neighborhood Involvement, as it is now known, was a reflection of the “epidemic” proportions of civic engagement in the community. There, the activism began in the 1960s and has sustained itself in a “virtuous cycle” ever since. Each of these examples seems to demonstrate a conscious choice to engage as many people as possible in decision making.

The “nonpolitical” programs were largely the result of looking for better ways to get work done. Interestingly, they all found social-capital development the most effective way to pursue their ends. In Chicago, when a new library was to be constructed, the city government decided to build and to use the library in a way that would bridge two neighborhoods that were suffering from longstanding animosity.

Do Something and the Experience Corps were educational programs that taught students that they could handle political problems themselves, and involved elderly citizens in mentoring, respectively. Students had to realize, in both cases, that if they

The best way to be successful ... was to make the company a community....

committed themselves to their goals and were trusted by adults, their possibilities were limitless. Experience Corps was especially conducive to developing social capital because it included two groups that needed to build relationships with others: students in underresourced schools, and a large retired population looking for meaningful engagement in their neighborhoods.

UPS, interestingly, as a corporate entity in pursuit of profit, found that the best way to be successful in making money was to make the company a community in and of itself, and to be involved in the places where it does business. These stories demonstrate how the most ordinary activities of shared life provide space for building cooperative relationships.

Some of the chapters tell stories of groups that began as efforts in community-building first, and developed social capital without calling it such. Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California, is first and foremost a religious institution, but its leaders recognized that a large part of what builds and maintains a healthy congregation is the feeling of cooperation and interdependence that people seek and rarely find in large churches. They incorporated small group discussions and networks of cooperation as a central part of their organizational structure early in the church's development and now have more than 45,000 members.

In Portsmouth, New Hampshire, one activist felt that there was a gulf between one part of the town, inhabited primarily by wealthy and politically liberal residents; and the other, where the majority of the residents were more politically conservative, and worked in the more labor-intensive Naval Shipyard. She began an arts project that opened a dialogue, and broadened the perspectives of residents throughout the town. The story of Tupelo, Mississippi, reaches back in time, to the 1940s, and shows that regardless of historical era, a place where there is a strong sense of a shared fate will face fewer challenges in economic development.

Craigslist.org is a unique example among the stories in *Better Together*. It poses the question of whether or not communal feelings and social capital can be built using the Internet. The authors conclude that when connected to a physical locality, the World Wide Web provides a powerful development tool, but that it is premature to speculate on the effectiveness of purely electronic community-building.

Better Together is a good entry point for practitioners looking to get their feet wet in more academic inquiry in the field of social capital. The book was accessible, the authors avoided jargon and

theoretical abstractions wherever possible, and made sense of the often-confusing language of social science. Though the authors seek to avoid a guiding set of principles, several characteristics run throughout the work, and were articulated in the concluding chapter.

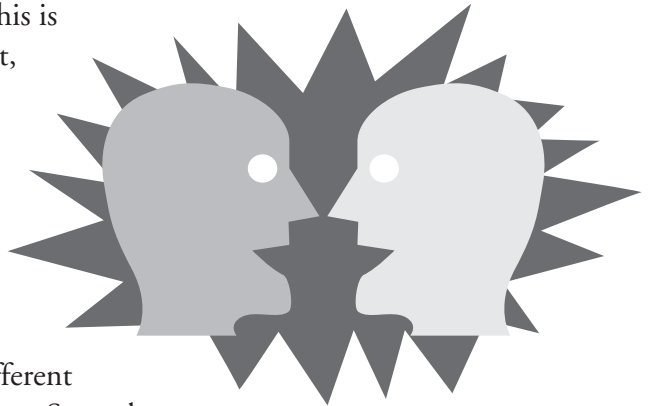
Almost all of these accounts seem to place value on utilizing existing social networks as a starting place for other organizing efforts. Once a community comes together and rises to a challenge, facing future challenges will be easier because of the social networks that they will have established. This sets up a virtuous cycle, which is a repeated theme in the book. Unfortunately, it is also noted that the opposite is true of vicious cycles in communities that cannot work cooperatively — those that have strong social capital are more able to foster it; those who do not have strong social capital face an uphill battle in promoting it.

Throughout *Better Together* the authors suggest that face-to-face conversation and storytelling are essential to building a sense of interdependence. This is

so for two reasons: first, people need to relate to one another on an emotional level, and substantive conversation allows people to empathize with those who share in their humanity, however different they are in other respects. Second,

storytelling begins as personal narratives, but after a group has won in “small battles,” and established rapport, they start to develop a shared narrative; “I” becomes “we.” Getting people to talk to one another is no easy task, and is often considered redundant in organizational development. But the authors remind that when efforts fail to develop social capital in the name of haste, problems are more likely to resurface later. Traditional organizing and political tactics can leave the door open for later conflict, and do little to correct the fundamental problems of communication that lead to conflicts in the first place.

Social capital is no silver bullet to political conflicts, however, and Putnam and company constantly remind that there will be difficulties and failures along the way. They disagree with the notion that government is not necessary in order for community



development to take place. Many of the activities in *Better Together* were initiated, strengthened, or at the very least, supported by some governmental or nonprofit entity. In fact, in several examples, government or professional actors either opened the door for citizen participation, or forced it on the individuals involved, who might otherwise have been more deferential to authority.

They further disagree with the idea that there must be a clearly defined “enemy” in an organizing effort. Though it is often the case that one group is in opposition to another, they claim that it is best for activists consciously not to demonize the opposition, and to maintain working relationships with them throughout the process.

Lastly, the authors acknowledge that some places face structural challenges that make social-capital building very difficult, indeed. In many areas, tax codes, zoning laws, and geography present challenges to communication.

Better Together is an excellent summary of some unique efforts at social-capital development, and a superb introduction to the idea of precisely what social capital means. For many practitioners, social capital is often difficult to describe, a sort of “you’ll know it when you see it” phenomenon, but here the reader is offered many chances to see it at its best. For theorists familiar with the idea of social capital, the book leaves something wanting. In the political organizing activities, questions regarding what made the professionals involved so eager to include the public, and how more professionals can be convinced to think this way, go unanswered. There is also a passing recognition of the existing homogeneity among members of each of these groups. None of them demonstrates cooperation across deeply entrenched divisions of both race and class within a single community, which is of particular interest to many in developing social capital.

Deliberative democrats might also be disappointed with *Better Together*, because other than in the examples of Valley Interfaith, The Shipyard Project, and Do Something, little attention is paid to the dialogue that led to decision making. Readers have few clues as to how participants related their values to the problems they were working with in these activities. We do not know whether or not they made decisions with tradeoffs in mind, nor do we know what decision-making rules allowed them to arrive at the conclusions they did. We can only take clues from

the nature of the organizations involved, and their traditional decision-making regulations.

Also, there seems to be great reluctance on the part of the authors to articulate a list of characteristics of social capital. Maybe this is due to the nature of academic discourse; it often seems to be at odds with something as inconsistent as social capital. The diversity of the stories in this very book proves that what is true of any one example of strong social capital may not be true of another, and that human behavior sometimes defies logical abstractions that are replicable. That said, *Better Together* remains an appropriate starting point for activists new to the notion of social capital, and a good reference point for those veterans who need concrete examples of theory in practice.

AFTERWORD: “WHAT PUBLIC?”

by David Mathews

I am delighted that David Brown has taken up the challenge of looking at all of the past issues of the *Higher Education Exchange* as though they were a single text. I have suggested that he and his coeditor, Deborah Witte, go one step further and, drawing from the articles, publish a book showing what has happened in the relationship between the public and institutions of higher education during the last ten years. I think it would be particularly helpful to analyze what public the authors of the articles had in mind when they wrote about colleges and universities “serving the public.”

“The public” and higher education has been much on my mind recently. I have been completing a chapter for a book being done under the auspices of the Kellogg Forum on Higher Education for the Public Good. At the same time, I have been participating in the Kettering Foundation’s semiannual review of a major area of its research, which happens to be the relationship between the public and the academy. Perhaps I should remind *HEX* readers that the Kettering Foundation doesn’t study higher education per se; the focus of the foundation’s research is always the public. With regard to higher education, Kettering asks what role colleges and universities play in addressing “the public and its problems.” And since the foundation has in mind the democratic or sovereign public, it concentrates on problems in self-government.

I am also writing an article for Kettering’s *Connections* on what the foundation has learned in the last three years from its research on the public-academy relationship and Kettering’s options for future studies. Each assignment has had a different objective — dashing my hopes that one essay would do for all! Complicating my task, “higher education” has as many definitions as “the public.”

For instance, first and most commonly, “higher education” is defined as a group of institutions that are responsible for serving the public good. Second, “higher education” can refer to the

faculty — a body of scholars. Historically, before there were institutions, higher learning was organized by medieval guilds. And the guild of scholars and teachers, now known as the faculty, had a relationship with “the public.” Scholars went beyond the original academic subjects, such as grammar, arithmetic, and astronomy, into fields with more explicit social and political implications. Ethics and law joined rhetoric and logic. Today, this outreach beyond the campus is described with phrases like “public scholarship.”

Third, discussions of higher education often focus on the students. Speaking historically again, universities also formed around guilds of students who “united for mutual protection,” sometimes from the teachers who were their masters and sometimes from the townspeople who were their landlords. Students have continued to be central to discussions of higher education’s obligations to the public because they are also citizens. But what kind of citizenship are they being taught? That question has been addressed in *HEX* and in Tom Ehrlich’s *Civic Responsibility and Higher Education*.

Using these three ways of thinking about higher education as a framework for this piece, I want to look at what *HEX* has had to say about each and then suggest additional topics that the journal might address in its ten-year retrospective.

Higher Education as a Group of Institutions: The Engagement Movement

Higher education understood as a group of institutions has been the subject of a great many articles in *HEX*. Colleges and universities appear to be repositioning themselves to become more “engaged” with the communities and states where they are located. Yet no one can be sure what all of the talk of engagement adds up to — or if it adds up at all. The term might merely be evidence of a more sophisticated public relations campaign to convince legislative bodies that institutions of higher learning deserve taxpayer support.

The test of whether something more fundamental is happening in academe is whether there is an organizing mentality at work or the sensibilities of a movement, such as a renewed sense of a civic mission. Movements develop out of a confluence of forces or the recognition of a common cause. And changes in higher education usually take place when external reforms extend into campuses, often transported there by students. If there is a civic

engagement movement going on today, how “engaged” institutions understand “the public” and its problems is crucial. An analysis of what has already been written in *HEX* could speak to that issue.

In addition to reviewing what was written since 1994, the editors might look at what other publications had to say about higher education. *HEX* articles on the civic mission of higher education appeared alongside comments by leaders who argued that any obligation they had to serve the public good was met by providing individuals with an excellent education. Other commentary dwelled on higher education’s increasing dependence on federal funding and corporate gifts. Pressure for greater institutional accountability to use these funds efficiently has put the emphasis on fiduciary, not civic, responsibility. To the extent there were discussions of higher education’s civic obligations, they tended to tout contributions to economic growth through research and technical assistance.

In addition to assessing the various ways of understanding “the public” in the literature on higher education, it could be useful to examine the discussions of the civic or public engagement that has been going on in government agencies, professional organizations, and public schools. These institutions have all suffered from a loss of confidence among citizens that began to show up in the polls in the 1970s and has persisted into the twenty-first century. Is there any connection among these initiatives? How is “the public” understood in the discussions of public engagement in institutions other than higher education?

Higher Education as Faculty: The Public Scholarship Movement

This publication has provided an ongoing forum on the relationship of the faculty to the public, particularly on “public scholarship,” which might be described as scholarship that expands the public’s capacity to take on the burdens of self-government.

In recent years, I have been invited to several faculty senates and other faculty gatherings to discuss what is happening under the rubric of “public scholarship.” In the light of the history of higher education in the latter half of the twentieth century, this is a fascinating development. The literature (Riesman, Jencks, Bender, Wolfe) suggests that today’s guild of scholars and teachers would have been almost exclusively concerned with academic

excellence — much of it achieved by independent researchers, alone in their studies and laboratories. So where are these new public scholars coming from? Why are they so interested in reaching out to the larger community? Why this urge to live both an academic and a public life — and live them together? Past articles should have some of the answers. And recent articles, such as “Democracy, Civic Participation, and the University” by Susan Ostrander, have been quite informative.

It is already clear there are many rooms in the new mansions of public scholarship; that is, there are many definitions of the term. And much is going on under the rubric of public scholarship that isn't connected. Personally, I am not troubled by this lack of orthodoxy and would be worried if public scholarship took on an organizational mentality. But, once again, how “public” scholars think of “the public” could be revealing if analyzed.

It would be particularly useful to know how scholars, whose business is the production of knowledge, think they can contribute to the creation of the kind of knowledge that a sovereign people need to govern. I tried to sketch out the challenge in my chapter for the Kellogg book, noting that public knowledge (really “practical wisdom”) is different from academic knowledge in both its nature and the way it is created. Cursorily put, public knowledge or practical wisdom is knowing how the public *should* act; it arises from deliberations among citizens and requires the exercise of the human faculty for judgment. That is to say, it is socially constructed. Expert or academic knowledge is more about *what is*; it is produced by the exercise of reason, which can be done by solitary scholars. Expert knowledge is useful in generating practical wisdom, but not sufficient. There are no experts on what should be.

We tackled this problem in 2002, and articles in that issue showed ways to do academic work that would make it more useful in the formation of practical wisdom. More recently, I have seen draft manuscripts that take quite a different approach to the role of the faculty in public life. Rather than extending the search for a better “fit” between academic and public ways of knowing, these manuscripts described ways that academics can go about their work so there is more space or opportunities for the public to generate public knowledge.

However public scholarship is defined, all forms face a common problem — acceptance. Public scholarship does not necessarily lead to the kind of articles favored by academic journals or

to funds from either federal or corporate agencies. If public scholarship is to have any standing, I suspect that trustees are going to have to play a different and more supportive role.

Trustees and Governance: No Movement?

I realize that I am violating my neat, tripartite framework by bringing up trustees in connection with the faculty rather than in the section on institutions, where they are usually discussed. But I want to make the point that boards get far less attention in discussions of higher education and the public than they warrant. There are issues where they could play a crucial role; one is in linking the faculty with the public.

Only one *HEX* article has been written on the subject of the civic responsibilities of boards, and that has not been for lack of interest by the editors. William Hubbard's interview in 2001 attempted to engage his fellow trustees in a conversation about the relationship of the academy to a democratic public. Except for a few pieces like that one, my impression is, most of what has been written by or for board members has dealt with financial and managerial issues. Hopefully, a review of this literature will show that I am wrong.

Trustees are not just citizens who take on a civic duty, they are also citizens legally empowered to structure the way educational institutions are governed. To be sure, the faculty has its own authority, which is reflected in the standards that institutions must meet in order to be accredited. While trustees should not be a law unto themselves, they are in a position to create more opportunities for their institutions to engage the citizenry at large — those citizens who aren't a part of the professional constituencies, alumni organizations, and groups of financial supporters that colleges and universities see every day.

I think it would be helpful to begin discussing new governance structures that could link the public and the academy more closely. There were such discussions some time ago. In the formative years of the American Association of University Professors, one of its founders, J. McKeen Cattell, proposed inclusive councils of both internal and external parties in which even members of the community could participate. I have always thought the kind of governance he championed made good sense. Cattell's plan for institutional governance didn't preclude independent associations of student, faculty, staff, and alumni (which are necessary), but it did provide for a unifying structure.

Higher Education as Students: The Service Movement

One way *HEX* has taken on the question of students' civic education is by publishing articles that students have written. Throughout our history, undergraduates from the Revolutionary War through the civil rights movement have brought the major political issues of the day to their campuses with the intention of affecting the political system. Today's collegians, however, have serious doubts about the ability of the political system to address the problems they care about. These doubts are reflected in their disinclination to vote.

Past *HEX* articles have tried to speak to these doubts by reporting on new directions in civic education. Other publications have dealt more with the highly successful community-service movement. Because of what service projects imply about the role of citizens, it would be useful to find out if the literature on volunteerism has discussed ways that students might take collective actions to address the causes of the problems that volunteers try to ameliorate.

Other literature has dealt with campus leadership programs. Have the articles concentrated on personal skill building and individual achievement? Or have they delved into the relationship of leaders to other citizens and the work of self-government — making collective decisions and taking collective action? I also think it would be important to find out how many articles have been written on roles that students might play in either public scholarship or institutional engagement.



I am enthusiastic about a review of what has appeared in the *Higher Education Exchange*. Disassembling and then reassembling the contents, along with examining what has been written on related issues in other publications, should go a long way toward making implicit concepts of the public explicit. As I said earlier, I believe that the fundamental issue in the civic engagement movement, the public-scholarship movement, and the student service movement is how the public is seen. A population to be served? A body of constituent groups? An aggregate of consumers? Citizens engaged in producing public goods?

My bottom line is this: There are concepts of self-rule and the sovereign citizenry that have powerful implications for higher education. One is the notion that a sovereign or democratic public

comes into being only when people begin to do the work of citizens, which Harry Boyte of the University of Minnesota calls “public work.” This way of conceptualizing the public sees it as a dynamic force rather than a static body of people. Kettering associate Cole Campbell, who originally made this distinction for Kettering, suggests that the public should be thought of more as electricity than a light bulb. In other words, the public doesn’t just do the work — doing the work creates the public. The working *is* the public. “Public-making,” therefore, isn’t separate from collective knowing, deciding (deliberating), and acting. It *is* those activities.

This way of understanding the public reframes the question of what academics can do to serve the public. The question now becomes what academics can do to contribute to public-making work. (Providing space for public work is one answer.) Who the academy has in mind makes all the difference, not just for higher education but for democracy itself.

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