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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

For more than 25 years now, the work of the Kettering Foundation has been focused on democracy. One premise of this work that has remained constant over the years is the belief that effective democracy requires citizens who have the ability, desire, and faith to deliberate together about the kind of life they want to live. Higher education's role in preparing citizens who can fulfill this responsibility is paramount. While most institutions of higher education have mission statements that address this responsibility to democracy in some way, for too many it is an empty promise, with no definite plan of action in place, no apparent evidence of commitment to the goal. Others, thank goodness, take this imperative seriously.

This issue of the *Higher Education Exchange* tells the story of some of those institutions and their faculty who take the civic mission question seriously. The contributors debate the issues around knowledge production, discuss the acquisition of deliberative skills for democracy, and examine how higher education prepares, or doesn't prepare, students for citizenship roles.

The issue begins with an article by Michael Briand who writes about political knowledge and judgment and how higher education, and political science in particular, can contribute to their formation. Briand agrees that truth, correctness, and predictive power are all types of knowledge that the academy should seek and embrace, he simply wants to expand the definition of knowledge to include political knowledge. He asserts that judgment is a "kind of knowledge most appropriate to political action" and suggests it is an inescapable need that lies at the heart of politics. He offers several examples of how judgment differs from the typical conceptions of knowledge, and how participation in real-world deliberative dialogue provides the best training ground for the development of judgment. Judgment is never complete or final, he reminds us. Democracy requires that we keep deliberating and, thereby, creating knowledge.

Adam Weinberg, in an interview, tells us about rebuilding campus life around principles of civic learning through public work. "We want students to think of themselves as members of a community who have a responsibility to work with others to create a healthy living environment," he tells coeditor David Brown. As an experiment, resident assistants (operating under a model of rules and procedures) were replaced with community coordinators who helped students, through conversation, come to solutions to the conflicts that are part of residential hall life. These student conversations became places to test ideas and refine concepts about living together. The challenge, for Weinberg, is to take students who have grown up in non-civic communities and equip them with the capacity and skills to be citizens.

Julie Ellison updates us about her work with Imagining America (IA), a public scholarship initiative centered on culture and the arts. IA's mission statement comes from the very people who are changing the ways cultural and humanistic knowledge is produced. At the core of this project is learning and knowledge-making through reciprocal relationships. "We imagined democratic institutions where access and knowledge would not be limited by one's race or economic circumstance," she offers. Her article addresses, among other things, tenure decisions based on co-creation when the knowledge model is different.

Harris Dienstfrey offers three stories of university-based centers and institutes that are engaged in the work of democracy with their communities. He introduces the term "democracy-through-deliberation" to describe the (historical) public forum where deliberation first contributed to democratic self-rule. He explores how today some universities employ deliberation as a community building tool, building democracy through discussion. He poses some provocative questions to the readers of *HEX* that I hope spur thoughtful responses.

David Cooper makes the case for joining the concepts of learning and community into a learning community within the university. He suggests that the academy is often at odds with society about purposes, and it is conflicted about whether their responsibility is to create good scholars or good citizens. He writes that colleges must do a better job of closing the gap between the world of ideas embraced by faculty and students' preference for concrete applications of knowledge. His concern for educating students for citizenship led him to shape a learning community

around the idea of "commonwealth." For Cooper, no question is ever strictly academic, as all lines of inquiry converge on some felt dimension of the lived experience. As a public scholar, he asks how the practices, methods, and conventions of his disciplinary scholarship can yield knowledge that contributes to public problem solving and public creation. He sees his students as active producers of knowledge and agents of democracy and calls for a framework for a unique learning ethos to take hold within the university.

Derek Barker has been studying academics that have embraced the scholarship of engagement. He offers a typology of five different approaches to the scholarship of engagement, each animated by a different theory of democracy, intention, and methodology. He provides a short history of the origins of public engagement, defined as finding creative ways to communicate to public audiences, work for the public good, and generate knowledge with public participation. His typology helps to frame new research on public scholarship, participatory research, community partnerships, public information networks, and civic literacy scholarship. All these practices are experimental and in flux, much like democracy itself. He suggests the academy is still trying to put its arms around the concept, thinking and doing at the same time.

Anne Thomason reviews Paul Woodruff's *First Democracy: The Challenge of an Ancient Idea*. Woodruff identifies seven core ideas of democracy, stemming from the Athenian idea of democracy, and suggests that they are missing from American democracy. Woodruff finds fault with three central aspects of democracy: voting, the election of representatives, and majority rule. He asserts that majority rule does not equal freedom from tyranny and suggests that people must participate in order for democracy to flourish. "Citizen wisdom" and "reasoning with knowledge" are two of Woodruff's core concepts, and he addresses the role education must play in democracy. As Thomason points out, Woodruff challenges his readers to pay more attention to teaching good citizenship.

David Mathews, in his *Afterword*, focuses on the different definitions of democracy that each article assumes. He sees notions of democracy explained variously as a political system, a social system, even a cultural system. He warns the reader not to lose sight of what these different viewpoints really represent, and that is deciding what kind of democracy we will have in the 21st century.

Postscript

Regular readers of the Exchange *may have noticed a name missing from the boilerplate. Betty Frecker, copyeditor for this journal and many other Kettering Foundation publications over the years, passed away last year. Betty's professionalism and commitment to excellence made working on this journal a pleasure. We miss her and dedicate this volume to her memory.*

KNOWLEDGE, JUDGMENT, AND DELIBERATIVE POLITICS

By Michael K. Briand

This article is excerpted from the longer work, To Inform Their Discretion: A Review of Kettering Foundation Research on the Role of Higher Education in American Democracy, 1982—2004 *(Dayton, Ohio: Kettering Foundation, 2005).*

Does it make sense to talk about political *knowledge*? After all, isn't "knowledge" supposed to be objective, like what science tells us—if not, it's just "opinion," isn't it? And isn't that what politics is really about—opinions? When people engage in political talk, they express their personal views about what their communities and society ought to be like. In politics people might claim that their positions are *right*, or their demands are *justified*, or their policy prescriptions are *good*. But it doesn't seem correct to say that what people bring to politics, or that what comes out of politics, is *knowledge*.

On the whole, contemporary higher education offers little help in determining whether there might be a viable conception of political knowledge. The conception of knowledge that, despite strong challenges from within the humanities, remains dominant in the intellectual life of colleges and universities is the one that originated in the natural sciences.

Political scientists have compounded the problem by applying the methods of the physical sciences to political phenomena and clinging reflexively to the principle of "objectivity." Objectivity is the commendable commitment to minimizing the impact of the investigator's dispositions, biases, and feelings on his or her effort to understand the phenomenon he or she is investigating. The problem is, objectivity typically is understood as requiring the observer to detach himself from the object of his observations— to stand at a distance in order to insulate himself from perceptions and feelings he might have were he to allow himself to experience the world from the point of view of the people he is studying.

But to do this is to throw the baby out with the bathwater. For unlike physical events, human social phenomena cannot be fully

and accurately comprehended only "from the outside." The view "from the inside"—from the subjective perspective of the people whose beliefs and motivations lead to the actions that constitute the phenomenon being studied—is indispensable. When objectivity is thought to require exclusion of the *content* of the subject's own views—his or her purposes, goals, values, principles, fears, aspirations, habits, and the like—the result is an incomplete, and hence inaccurate, understanding of it. Without the information that only subjects themselves can supply, the social/political scientist is (like each of the blind men trying to describe the elephant) confined to her own vantage point and cannot "see" the phenomenon in its entirety.

The difficulty of characterizing any political assertions as statements of something that can be *known* thus presents an apparent problem for any conception of politics that calls for a public discourse in which people give each other good reasons for choosing one course of action rather than another. Eventually, every person who makes a good faith effort to rely on exchanging reasons as a way to resolve political disagreements will discover that, ultimately, political arguments rest on statements that lack the force of logical deductions or verifiable facts. When political reasoning arrives at basic premises, argument ceases and the choice of one conclusion rather than another comes down to a matter of personal preference.

Is there any way out of this predicament? Specifically, is there a way of thinking about *knowledge—political* knowledge—that would help members of a democratic community or society deliberate together with a probability of success sufficiently high to enable them to reach the practical agreement needed for a public decision or policy to be effective?

I believe there is. But the plausibility of this way of conceiving political knowledge depends on accepting that political knowledge can be generated by reasoning undertaken for the purpose of deciding *what to do*—not by reasoning of the sort employed in science and mathematics, the purpose of which is to ascertain what facts about the world *we can know*.

Judgment

Is there, then, a type of knowledge we can draw upon in our efforts, as communities and as a society, to make well-founded public decisions involving rational assertions about what we ought

to do? The beginning of an answer can be found in John MacCormack's contention that "the humanities are foundational [in higher education] because they educate the *judgment*."[1] Philosophers as different as Kant, Dewey, Arendt, and Habermas have proposed that judgment is not only a valid form of knowledge; it is also the kind of knowledge most appropriate to political action. The process of forming a judgment, on this view, is the art of drawing on a combination of experience and intuition to "fill in the gap" that remains after all reasons have been exhausted and further rational deliberation is not feasible. A person's or community's judgment—the conclusion they reach—is the knowledge created by the skillful practice of this art.

The need for judgment in political decision-making is inescapable, for two reasons. First, when we have to decide how to act, often it's not possible to choose a course of action that will promote one good or value without requiring a sacrifice in terms of other goods or values. If we decide to give one end or course of action priority over others, we may have to sacrifice the value that would be realized by pursuing the ends or courses of action we do not choose. The question of what we should give priority in a conflict between good things has no objectively correct answer—it calls for judgment. What's right or best to do is not a fact that's given, but rather a solution we must *construct*. The conclusion we reach is our best judgment. To reach this judgment, we have to *deliberate*—identify the various courses of action open to us, weigh (with reference to the goods or values that are in conflict) the considerations in favor of and against each option, and then discern what seems to be the wisest thing to do, on-balance and all things considered.

The second reason why we can't avoid judgment in political decision-making is that our beliefs about what is good and bad, right and wrong, relevant and irrelevant, true and false are *generalizations*. A generalization doesn't cover—it cannot and will not ever cover—every situation that could or will arise. The difficulty of making tough choices is compounded by the fact that every set of circumstances is unique. Applied to specific situations, general principles do not yield definitive answers. They take us only so far. In the end, we have to exercise judgment.

Clearly, judgment differs from what we usually think of as knowledge. As Elizabeth Minnich has observed, judgment is neither deductive, the way logic or mathematics is, nor inductive,

What's right or best to do is not a fact that's given, but rather a solution we **must construct.**

as in the natural sciences.[2] David Mathews agrees. Judgment, he says, is required most when there are no hard and fast rules to follow, when we have to deal with questions that can't be answered by logic and scientific knowledge alone. At the heart of politics lies the need to deal with uncertainty—"not about the facts, but about what ought to be."[3]

The type of knowledge that is appropriate for politics, then, is not truth, or correctness, or "predictive power"—it is the *soundness* of our judgments. For a public decision to be sound, it must "make sense" to—it must be acceptable to—all who will be affected by it. But no one can know what is acceptable unless and until people deliberate together. A major point in Kant's philosophy is the contention that critical thinking about practical matters (such as ethical and political decisions) cannot be a private activity. Hannah Arendt wrote that no one can exercise judgment alone. In ethics and politics, we must be in conversation with others in order to reach even a personal judgment. The process of forming a public judgment is one and the same with that of forming a personal (ethical or political) judgment. As Robert Kingston has quipped, "I don't know what I think about this issue, because we haven't talked about it."
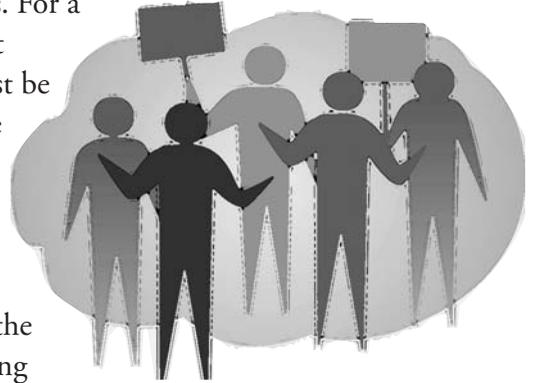
William Sullivan illuminates judgment further when he writes that it proceeds "by comparison and contrast."[4] Deliberative dialogue impels us to compare and contrast differences: different experiences, different situations, different assessments, and different conclusions. This suggests that participation in real-world deliberative dialogue provides the best training ground for the development of judgment. But judgment can be cultivated as well through the examination of examples. According to Sullivan, teaching practical judgment "proceeds by leading the learner to understand why a good example is good, so that he or she can articulate reasons why it represents an excellent 'solution' to a problem situation." Case studies are useful in this respect. Bent Flybjerg has proposed the idea of a "phronetic social science" built on the Aristotelian concept of *phronesis*, or practical

wisdom, which emphasizes "the analysis of 'actual daily practices.'"[5] He regards the case study as "an essential method for phronetic research, a method that makes generalizations stronger because they're based on concrete, contextual evidence."

We can see how markedly judgment differs from the conception of knowledge that prevails in academia today by considering the following contrasts:

- Judgment is oriented to enabling citizens to deliberate, to make choices, and to decide what they ought to do, as a community or society, in response to a problem or issue of a public nature. Academic knowledge aims to describe and explain reality—to generate theories and facts about the world as it actually is.

- Judgment deals with particular—even unique—places, problems, and circumstances. Academic knowledge identifies key features from many particular instances and produces generalizations about similar instances, filtering out the details that make each situation unique.

- Judgment makes room for the subjective perspectives of those who are making and who will be affected by a decision. Academic knowledge strives for "objectivity," which assumes that the human social phenomenon being studied can be fully and accurately comprehended "from the outside." For judgment, the view "from the inside"—from the subjective perspective of all the people involved—is indispensable. To the extent that a commitment to objectivity requires exclusion of the content of the actors' own views, the resulting understanding is incomplete, and hence inaccurate. Without this information, the researcher is confined to her own (limited) vantage point and cannot "see" the phenomenon in its entirety.

- Judgment permits—indeed, requires—evaluation of ends and purposes. Academic knowledge requires abstention from evaluating ends and purposes. Only means may be assessed critically; ends and purposes must be taken as given.

- Judgment is generated through dialogue and deliberation. Only citizens judging together can say what the "correct" or "true" answer to a public problem or issue is. Academic knowledge is determined by scholarly

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experts who subscribe to the norms, methods, and techniques of their various disciplines.

- Judgment accepts uncertainty. Academic knowledge attempts to eliminate or, at least, minimize it.
- Judgment aspires to be sound. Academic knowledge aspires to be accurate, correct, "true"—to describe and explain phenomena as they "are."
- Judgment is never complete or final. Academic knowledge aspires to increasing adequacy, comprehensiveness, and reliability, the expectation being that eventually a phenomenon will be fully and finally understood.

Judgment is never complete or final.

Making Room for Judgment

The point of the foregoing contrast is not to argue for elimination of the academic conception of knowledge, but rather to urge that scholars incorporate the practical conception into a broader understanding of knowledge. In David Mathews' view, treating the academic conception as the *only* knowledge that bears properly on the conduct of public affairs not only marginalizes citizens and devalues their contribution, it "greatly impoverishes the knowledge-creation process as well," depriving both scholars and decision-makers of information upon which effective policymaking depends.[6] Finally (and for present purposes, significantly), Harry Boyte contends that the "dominant theories of knowledge and scholarship tend strongly to detach faculty from an interest in civic mission and public engagement as legitimate aspects of professional work."[7]

Recognizing the distinctive role of judgment in political thought and discourse is imperative. By incorporating the practical conception into a broader understanding of knowledge, scholars and the colleges and universities that employ them might take on a more active, substantial, and productive role in building the practice of public politics, preparing students for participation in this practice, and thereby enhancing the prospects for genuine democratic self-rule.

ENDNOTES

[1] John R. MacCormack, "Human Values and the University," *The Antaeus Report*, Delaware, Ohio: Ohio Wesleyan University, Fall 1983.

[2] Elizabeth K. Minnich, "Some Reflections on Civic Education in the Curriculum," Dayton, Ohio: Kettering Foundation, memorandum, 16 May 1988.

[3] David Mathews, "Teaching Politics As Public Work: An Alternative Theory of Civic Education," keynote address, National Conference on the Future of Civic Education, Washington, D.C., 5-7 October 1988.

[4] William M. Sullivan, "Education for the Common Good," *The Civic Arts Review*, Delaware, Ohio: Center for the Study of Education and Society, Ohio Wesleyan University, Winter/Spring 1991.

[5] Bent Flybjerg, "Making Social Science Matter," *Higher Education Exchange*, Dayton, Ohio: Kettering Foundation, 2002.

[6] David Mathews, "Inventing Public Scholarship" *Higher Education Exchange*, Dayton, Ohio: Kettering Foundation, 1996.

[7] Harry C. Boyte, "Public Engagement in a Civic Mission: A Case Study," Washington, D.C.: Council on Public Policy Education, 2000.

PUBLIC WORK AT COLGATE

An Interview with Adam Weinberg

David Brown, coeditor of the Higher Education Exchange*, spoke with Adam Weinberg, Dean of the College at Colgate University and a professor of sociology, to learn more about the ongoing story of "public work" as it has emerged at Colgate.*

Brown: To start off, Adam, can you describe the work that you have been doing at Colgate?

Weinberg: It has been a seven-year process to rebuild campus life at Colgate around principles of civic learning. We started by getting about 400 students involved in a partnership with the local community around economic development. We did everything from work on a micro-enterprise program to help develop a "buy local" campaign. That work led to about $15 million of investment in the local community. We then launched an innovative community center to move students from thin forms of service to deeper forms of team-based community work.

Based on lessons learned from the community work, we launched our residential education program, which has gotten a lot of national attention. The basic idea was to "capture all the educational moments" that take place during students' time on campus. We have focused on capturing the civic potential in residential halls, student organizations, and other forms of everyday life.

It is really a very simple concept. Rather than getting students to go through a one-size fits all program, we asked ourselves what are students doing outside the classroom? What do students want to do? Can we tweak those things just a little to give them some educational value? To get to this place, we have focused on getting students to do what Harry Boyte and others call public work. Harry has a great quote in his last book where he calls for educational institutions to develop, with young people, the capacities and interest to work with others, to "negotiate diverse interests for the sake of creating things with broad public benefit." This requires creating a more entrepreneurial campus culture where students would think of themselves as innovators, creators, and problem

solvers. It required us to change our approach to campus life; we had tried to find civic learning in every corner of students' daily lives.

Brown: You mentioned getting national attention. What is the significance of the work you describe?

Weinberg: We started from the observation that students lead busy lives outside the classroom, but we do not do a good job of capturing the educational value in those activities. Partially, this comes about because colleges and universities use professionalized models, where people solve problems for students. For example: residential halls are filled with layers of professional staff who spend their time solving problems by enforcing an endless stream of rules. If a student has a roommate conflict, he or she calls the Office of Residential Life and a professional staff member will find the proper rule or procedure to solve the problem. This is a horrible way to organize an educational environment. We rob students of opportunities to learn through problem solving. We reinforce notions of entitlements, as students come to see college staff as service providers and themselves as customers or guests.

At Colgate, we have moved away from a professional service model by infusing campus with the spirit of public work. We want students to think of themselves as members of a community who have a responsibility to work with others to create a healthy living environment. We are then working with them to make sure that they have the organizing skills to act on their public values.

In my view, there are a few important shifts embedded in this view: first, we are arguing that we need to give students a more robust definition of democracy, which moves beyond democracy as voting and community service to democracy as a way of life. To get to this place, we need to capture all the educational moments. Civic education takes place in campus controversies, residential halls, student organizations, campus planning, and a range of other places. Finally, we are challenging people to move beyond values. We need to make sure that our students have the skills and habits to act on their values.

Brown: Where has the most exciting or surprising work taken place at Colgate?

Weinberg: Definitely residential halls. I came up through the service-learning movement. I was fixated on getting students out of the residential halls and into the community. It never occurred to me that residential halls were equally good settings to teach the arts of democracy.

Take the typical residential hall—we pack a diversity of students into small spaces. 90 percent of these students have never shared a room with another person. Likewise, the diversity in each hall grows as students become more diverse by race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, alcohol and other drug (AOD) issues, and a range of other categories. As this occurs, the halls become filled with disagreement and conflict. Too often we approach these conflicts as if we are running hotels or resorts. We see problems as things to be avoided or solved.

Instead, we have learned to use conflicts as opportunities to help students learn to do public work. We have redefined the role of our Residential Advisors (RA or student staff who live on each hall). Rather than being police officers who enforce rules or professionalized staff who solve problems, we want them to think of themselves as coaches and mentors who organize teams of students to tackle problems and/or take advantage of opportunities. We have also created community councils in each residential unit where students learn how to organize others, how to identify problems and opportunities, and how to brainstorm solutions through social action.

Community starts in the small democratic actions that people take in the everyday.

One of my favorite stories occurred in a freestanding college house where students were organizing a co-op dining plan. Conflict broke out because everybody left their dirty dishes in a sink. In the old student services model, an RA would have developed and imposed a set of rules on the house. It would not have worked. The RA would have been demoralized and the community would have fallen apart. In the new model, we replaced the RA with a community coordinator (a student) who is basically a community organizer. The community coordinator brought everybody together and led a group brainstorming session that resulted in a creative solution. The group went to the local hardware store, bought a piece of Styrofoam and placed it in half of the sink, which left no place for students to dump the dirty dishes. The students did public work. They worked across difference to solve a problem that had lasting social value. They also learned that community starts in the small democratic actions that people take in the everyday.

Brown: And student organizations, what about them?

Weinberg: Our campus is filled with 130+ student organizations that produced thousands of potential educational moments for students to learn important civic skills like mobilizing peers, facilitating a meeting, creating an action plan, working

in teams and resolving conflicts. We were capturing virtually none of those moments. If you walked around campus at night, you would see people involved in student organizations that did not work. Meetings were poorly planned. Organizations lacked mission statements, much less action plans for the semester. Minor conflicts led to splintering of groups. Not surprisingly, most groups were fixated on developing programs that were ill-conceived. Tactics never matched goals, and resources were usually poorly aligned with actions. This also had negative macro campus effects, as student organizations divided students into tiny identity groups. Whereas we wanted student organizations to become places for students to "walk across difference" (meet different kinds of people), student organizations became mechanisms for creating comfort zones.

We created a Center for Leadership and Student Involvement and hired great mentors who could work with students to transform campus organizations into civic educational experiences. We started by changing how students think about student organizations. Rather than thinking in terms of activities, we have gotten students to think about themselves as community organizations that drive campus life. We started focusing heavily on training and skills development. We run an organizing summit before classes start. We help student organizations to work as a team to produce action plans for events, which include goals, strategies, and tactics. We use alumni, parents, and local community members to teach students to plan meetings, facilitate conversations and to work through conflict.

We also created new funding mechanisms to encourage students to organize, plan and work across difference. For example: we started a program called Breaking Bread, through which students can access a pool of money to fund a wide variety of events. There is only one caveat: students have to plan the event with a group of students with whom they normally do not interact. They plan the event over dinner. The groups work together to create the menu, shop, cook, set up, and clean up. The outcome of the dinner is a series of objectives that the groups want to work together to accomplish together. In other words, they "break bread" together and plan events that will make the campus more vibrant and robust with regards to race and ethnic issues.

They do public work by learning to walk across difference, to be co-creators of public goods. For example: Sisters of the Round Table (women of color) and Rainbow Alliance (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning) did some great work together. So did the College Republicans and the Muslim Student Association.

Brown: Going back in time for a moment, who specifically formulated the strategic objectives ("residential education for Democracy")? How long did it take?

Weinberg: It was a community-based process. We spent a year talking about civic learning. At first, the conversations were formal planning/visioning conversations, but the circles were wide and the conversations were open-ended. People had space to talk across the community in ways that typically had not happened before. Our psychologists, administrative deans, campus safety officers, career service staff, and others spent hours sharing ideas about concepts and theories of democracy and civic education. We then organized another set of conversations to bring student affairs staff together with faculty and students. For example: a group of students, faculty, and administrators met weekly to talk about building civic life as a way to deal with alcohol issues.

All of this started to generate excitement and optimism that new things were possible. The circle widened beyond the formal conversations. A series of informal conversations emerged. These conversations were organic, but connected to the formal conversations in overt and subtle ways. New participants, including more students and faculty, were invited to join. These conversations became places to test ideas, refine concepts, and find new participants. The end product was an on-campus community of students, faculty, and administrators thinking about, defining, and developing new ways to deepen civic learning.

Brown: Was there anything about Colgate's culture that made it resistant?

Weinberg: Absolutely. Most of the resistance was generational. This generation of students and parents see entitlements, not responsibilities. They think about college as purchasing a set of services for my child to make them happy and professionally successful. Of course, we are moving in a different direction.

As I said earlier, this generation has great values, but they lack the skills to act on those values. Who would be surprised given the ways families and communities organize childhood? Everything has become structured and professionalized, which is

the surest way to kill creativity and innovation and teamwork, which are the hallmarks of public work. We have a generation that doesn't like confrontation or conflict. They either avoid conflict or hold firm to polarized views, much like we see on talk radio. They also have a hard time holding each other accountable. They work better when other people organize them and set expectations. This generation has too many umbrella parents who are extending adolescence far into adulthood, while also narrowing how young people come to define the purpose of education and the value of civic life.

Brown: Given their professional aspirations (and their parents for them) and the high cost of a private university, why would students be interested in developing habits of citizenship in their residence halls and other venues?

Weinberg: In the abstract, it is easy. People are wiser and care much more than we give them credit for. There is a great cynicism about Americans that I don't understand. People care about democracy. They understand that places like Colgate have a civic mission and that colleges and universities need to produce citizens.

People push back when we tell them that we are not going to solve a problem, but want their son/daughter to learn to problem solve with others. I would argue that 70 percent of our parents love it and deeply understand why we do it. 30 percent would rather we not, but they understand the rationale. 80 percent still push when it is about their child, but we have gotten very good at explaining the philosophy.

For example: a parent will call us because a roommate is keeping up their son/daughter. We explain that this is a great opportunity for their son/daughter to learn how to get along with people and to negotiate space—a fundamental skill of democracy. A parent will respond by saying that they don't care about civic skills, they sent their child to college to get good grades so they can get a good job. We spend lots of time trying to help parents reexamine why we provide young people with an education—especially a liberal arts education.

Of course, there is an irony. Civic skills are also great life skills. While we are focused on students learning to run a meeting, work

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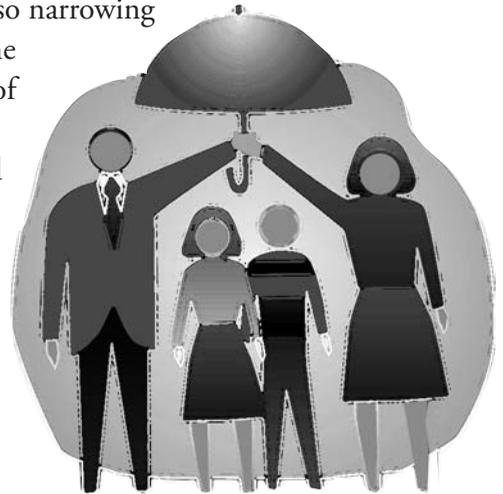
with others, negotiate conflicts, do planning, parents also understand these to be skills that will make them professionally successful.

I think we grossly underestimate how much Americans want educational institutions to be relevant politically and civically. We tend to sell ourselves for the economic impact—we produce good workers and students who can fill jobs. Politically, higher education would garner more national attention if we resold ourselves as institutions that will produce citizens who can lead communities.

Brown: Changing any organization's culture is difficult and time consuming. Does the four-year window you have for most students make that even harder?

Weinberg: Four years is fine. It would be better if students came to college a bit later, and/or came with a richer set of life experiences, walking across difference and taking responsibility for themselves and others. I would advocate for a year, or two, of national service for every student in either the military or AmeriCorps. I would love to see colleges like Colgate give admissions points to students who take a year off and do something independent.

It would also help if students came to college with a set of life experiences dealing with diversity. Too many students are growing up in very homogeneous environments. Students are growing up in very diverse metropolitan regions with remarkably homogeneous sets of life experiences. They live in neighborhoods, attend schools and do structured activities with kids like themselves. To compound the problem, they tend to be in smaller families where everybody has their own room and "stuff." Finally, given the way we structure childhood, adults make sure that the kids who do not get along are on different teams, in a different classroom. All of this means that really wonderful young people come to college lacking the experiences it takes to live democratically (working with others, negotiating conflict, walking across difference…).

Brown: Was it particularly hard for students already there compared to entering students?

Weinberg: Yes. Change is hard. This generation does not like change. They are working hard to create small friendship networks as a way to recreate the "safe communities" that their parents created for them growing up. This generation is part of a rapidly changing world, and they will need the skills to negotiate that world.

Brown: You have moved students from individual service opportunities to group problem solving. Have there been

Young people come to college lacking the experiences it takes to live democratically.

"unintended consequences" in such a shift, either on campus or with local communities?

Weinberg: Sure. Students wind up mobilizing against the local power structure—which is me! Students also solve problems in ways that have unintended consequences for others. The campus becomes filled with conflict, controversy. It just all becomes messy. You have to learn to embrace and love it.

Brown: Given what you and others have done at Colgate, has it had any measurable effect on the recruitment and retention of students? Of faculty? Of staff?

Weinberg: Residential education allowed us to think anew about old problems. It also sent a message that we were going to take ourselves more seriously, wade into the middle of national conversations, be relevant and a bit edgy, and try to lead the country. This had a huge impact across the university. Admissions applications were up 20 percent last year. This is a huge leap and more than peer schools. We yielded really well the last two years. We suspect that we are becoming a hot school within important pipelines for us.

We have also had two great fundraising years. Fundraising is changing. Younger alumni are more investment oriented. They want to make sure that their dollars have an impact. We are finding that our alumni increasingly care about civic learning. They are worried about the lack of civil discourse in America and the global challenges and opportunities for democracy. They are excited about residential education. We are getting great applications for student affairs jobs. Most student affairs people know the professionalized service model does not work. They are excited to come to a place that is building campus life around principles of civic learning.

Brown: Getting back to your observation that most students come to Colgate having never shared a room with anyone, having led very structured lives organized by their parents and other adults, and having grown up in homogeneous neighborhoods. If these are obstacles for what you and others are trying to change at Colgate, does this mean that the mix of those recruited and admitted will undergo change too?

Weinberg: I hope not. I don't want Colgate to become a success through skimming. Or put more crassly, I don't want to put the hoop over the dog (as opposed to teaching the dog to jump through the hoop). Colgate attracts great students, many of
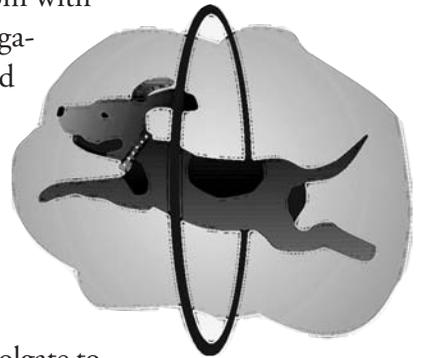
whom will go on to make a difference in the world. The problem is not the students. The challenge is to take students who have grown up in non-civic communities, and to equip them with the capacity and skills to be citizens, community organizers, and democratic leaders.

Brown: When you speak of administrators, staffs, and residential advisors getting out of the way and letting students take responsibility for the problems that arise among them, do they, and do the students really accept and live with whatever outcomes emerge?

Weinberg: It is a dance. Like democracy, it is messy, and it is a negotiated process that never ends. We are living with things that we don't like, but we also place boundaries. For example: we have a row of freestanding houses. It is our old fraternity row. Some of the houses are fraternities; others are theme houses, sororities or new entrepreneurial houses. Last year, we encouraged the students to create a Broad Street Community Council (BSCC) to self-govern the program. We focused them around notions of public work and created a venture social fund they could use to encourage innovation and creativity.

In some ways, the BSCC is working on issues in ways that I wouldn't choose—some of the solutions are just too formalized. But, we continue to be supportive and to let them organize in ways that they deem valuable. We keep telling them "here are nine different ways to do something." You can pick one of the nine, or invent a tenth. We are clear that they need a way, but we will support their choice. But we will only do it within boundaries. We are working hard to get students to see democracy as governance, not government. We don't want students on Broad Street to reduce self-governance to electing a council that does things for them. We want every student on Broad Street to see democracy as a way of life, and the council as a resource for groups of students who want to come together to do public work.
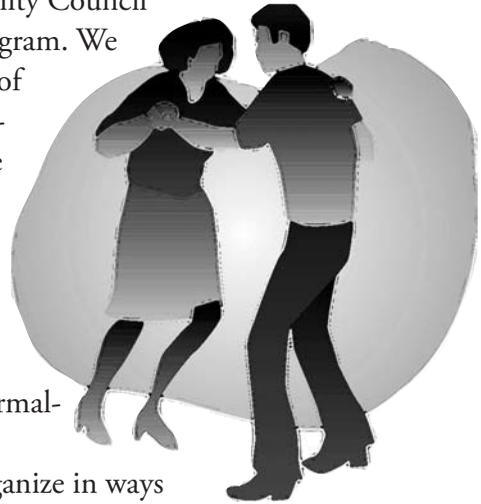
Brown: Faculty involvement seems to have been an important part of all that you and others have done. Given the habits and priorities of faculty, have there been significant changes in the degree of their participation?

Weinberg: Yes. More faculty are aware of what we are doing, and they are helpful in articulating the message and support with students. And more faculty are involved in programs and (more important) in planning. We created two teams of faculty, student-affairs staff, and coaches. One is focused on the first-year experience; and one is focused on the sophomore-year experience. They are trying to ensure that we are thinking broadly across the totality of what we are doing. We also have faculty heavily involved in other programs. A few have even offered to live in our residential halls!

Perhaps the most important involvement has been the very informal ways faculty mentor students. As one would expect, our faculty spend lots of time with students in their offices, talking about all sorts of things. As part of this, faculty have been really important in helping change the culture. One of the hardest parts of the shift is getting students to understand a changed set of expectations for college life. Faculty are involved in helping explain the message.

It is also interesting, however, that faculty have not driven this process. There is a division of labor that works for us. There is a lot of "chatter" in the higher education community about getting faculty re-engaged in the "out of the classroom" experience. I am not sure that this needs to be a priority for doing civic education. I don't think that we need to return to a mythic version of 1950. A lot of this is driven by changes that are good. Faculty have working spouses. Faculty are engaged in research that really matters to moving society forward. I would argue that we need faculty to worry about how to do civic education through the classroom with more engaged pedagogies (e.g. problem-based learning, service learning, community-based research). We need student affairs folks to worry about doing this through things like residential programs and student organizations. And we need student affairs and academic affairs leaders (e.g. administrators and faculty idea entrepreneurs) to be talking/coordinating with each other.

Brown: Are you saying, that with more non-academic professionals available, they are better at "doing civic education" than faculty members?

Weinberg: No. Nothing works better than service learning. The data collected by Campus Compact, the National Survey on Student Engagement, and others is very clear on this point. I would argue that faculty should be doing it in the classroom. And student-affairs folks should be doing it through campus life. It should be coordinated, but a division of labor is okay. We should be comfortable with it. It is community organizing 101—everybody has a role and those roles should be coordinated.

Brown: Assuming that Colgate, like most other institutions of higher education, operates in a "conflicted state of educational values and priorities," how have such conflicts affected the work that you have undertaken there with others?

Weinberg: There are all sorts of tensions. Faculty want to do service learning, but they also have time constraints. It is also true with parents and their visions for what we should be doing. We get some interesting push back from alumni who view our programs as social engineering when, in reality, we are giving students more control than they had under the old models. And there are always battles over allocation of resources.

Brown: When we spoke earlier, you said that it is easy to justify civic education within the context of the liberal arts. If so, why then has the classroom been a problem?

Weinberg: Part of it is real. Faculty have multiple demands on their time. They have lots of competing needs for the classroom. Part of it is new. We are just starting to understand the power of engaged pedagogies. That requires constructing structures with incentives to help faculty stay on the cutting edge of teaching.

Great civic education comes from faculty who think about themselves, their work, and their teaching in much more craft-like ways.

But part of it is also less real, or self-imposed in destructive ways. Too many faculty have professionalized themselves. They see themselves as a narrow type of scientist. My father was a scientist. I often find it odd that many faculty in the social sciences are trying to be a sort of scientist that most scientists would not want to be. Great civic education comes from faculty who think about themselves, their work, and their teaching in much more craft-like ways. My discipline (sociology) may be the worst. As we become more professionalized, we have less to offer students and are more irrelevant to larger public conversations. Given the history of sociology, we should see lots of sociologists interested in civic education and/or service learning. Instead, sociologists are scared that it will make them seem "weak" or "not a real scientist."

Brown: Is there feedback from faculty members that what the University is encouraging students to do outside the classroom is affecting what's going on inside their classrooms?

Weinberg: Sure….there are two sorts of murmurs in the system: (1) it detracts from academic work, and (2) some students are not joiners. But, this is really a small group. Most faculty are concerned that campus culture not be anti-intellectual. A focus on civic learning reignites an intellectual feel, a robustness and vibrancy that is essential for a learning environment. Also, civic learning is consistent with the liberal arts. It is all about innovation, creativity, and problem solving.

Brown: Why was the campus culture "anti-intellectual?"

Weinberg: Largely, it is a national problem. Too many students come to college either fixated on careers (and thus they are purely consumers who want to know the facts they need to memorize in order to get a good grade) or looking for a four-year vacation filled with parties (see Tom Wolfe's most recent book). We are not serious enough about education. We don't ask enough of our students. And our students don't ask enough of themselves. Ironically, some of the most serious campuses that I have been on are community colleges and/or tier three public institutions, where students are coming desperate for an education. We have worked hard to make Colgate a more serious place, and it is working. Our civic education work was a key component of that strategy.

Brown: Obviously, in any initiative such as the one, we are discussing, the self-interest of the institution is heavily engaged. Has that self-interest been adequately served by what has happened in the local communities and on campus? For example, have such initiatives affected the "status" concerns of alumni, which you note in your "The University: An Agent of Social Change" piece?

Weinberg: In huge ways. The transformation of the Village has been so positive for Colgate. More alumni come back to campus for weekends. They are proud of Colgate and Hamilton. We used to hear prospective students complain about the Village, now they talk about it as a draw.

Brown: Are there dissenting opinions, and, if so, what are their concerns?

Weinberg: Yes. People will argue that there is too much emphasis on student affairs, cynicism about students (can this really work). But it is amazingly small. Without conflicts around

fraternities, it would almost be non-existent.

Brown: In the "Social Change" piece, you mention the "generation of faculty moving into deans' positions who came of age in the movements of the 60s." Does that describe your own journey? Did you become "disillusioned and professionalized" along the way? Did you "retool your professional obligations?" Could you tell me more about that journey?

Weinberg: I was born in 1965, so I am too young. My journey is probably more typical of the younger academics, who are becoming associate faculty and taking on administrative roles. I came into the academy because everybody was going to graduate school and I didn't want to go to law school. I was searching for a way to combine different passions: community organizing, writing, the world of ideas. I was also looking for a profession that would allow me to live my politics. I wanted an egalitarian marriage.

I was also driven into the academy by a passion for democracy. I wanted to spend my life working on ways to make communities (the places people live) more democratic. That is why I was attracted to community-based research and service learning. I wanted to raise my children in a social and political household. I probably would have left graduate school had community-based research and service learning not become acceptable ways of doing things. It gave me ways to combine my passions for community work with my love for writing and thinking. I stayed because I came to understand the untapped potential of universities. Along the way, I fell deeply in love with teaching.

Over time, I have become more optimistic and less professionalized. I see my work as a craft. I came very close to leaving the academy a few years ago. I had viewed myself as an academic who was focused externally. I had never envisioned myself as an administrator. I actually thought that I would be one of those people who moved back and forth between the non-profit/government to university worlds. But, I became excited by academic administration. I came to work for a great college president, Rebecca Chopp.

Brown: And now…?

Weinberg: I am not sure! I am having fun. When an institution takes up public work/civic education as a driving principle, you can achieve amazing results on students, faculty research, community development, alumni, and parents, and even helping to shape the agendas of foundations and trade associations.

In my current role, I was able to advocate that civic learning become a top priority for Colgate. We are on the verge of universities becoming more relevant…or we could be…. I wanted to be part of that process. I also see management as another arena of public work. In three years, we have managed to de-professionalize our student affairs division recentering it around notions of public work. This is my own way of thinking about and contributing to a "democracy through the workplace" movement.

Brown: In your "Social Change" piece, you say "there is neither one magic factor nor even one linear process that leads to universities becoming an agent of social change." If so, does that mean that what is happening at Colgate cannot be replicated somewhere else?

Weinberg: The lessons learned can be replicated. I am a community organizer and educator, at heart. I don't think that there is a one-size-fits-all model. But, I do believe that we can train people with skills, concepts, and theories to build their own paths for their own communities.

Brown: And now…?

Weinberg: I have had a lot of fun at Colgate. When an institution takes up public work/civic education as a driving principle, you can achieve amazing results on students, faculty research, community development, alumni, and parents, and even helping to shape the agendas of foundations and trade associations. In my current role, I have been able to advocate that civic learning become a top priority for Colgate. We are on the verge of universities becoming more relevant...or we could be.... I am excited to be part of that process. I also see management as another arena of public work. In three years, we have managed to de-professionalize our student affairs division, recentering it around notions of public work. This is my own way of thinking about and contributing to a "democracy through the workplace" movement.

Having said that, I am ready for a new set of challenges. In January 2006, I will be moving to World Learning to become the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Provost of SIT—the School for International Training. I want to spend the next phase of my career working on civic education in more global settings. World Learning has been a leader in this field. They are also the only academic institution with a large international development operation. At any given point, they

have about 3,000 people working in over 100 countries on social and economic development projects. This position blends my dual passions for civic education and community development.

    Brown: Thank you, Adam.

THE CHAIN REACTIONS OF PUBLIC SCHOLARSHIP

By Julie Ellison

Imagining America: What's in a Name?

When Imagining America (IA) was a year old in 2002 and had about 35 member campuses, David Brown interviewed me for the *Higher Education Exchange (HEX)*. That conversation allowed me to test out my personal language for explaining Imagining America's agenda for "structural change" in higher education, propelled by experimental forms of public engagement through the humanities, arts, and design. That interview also contained a set of keywords, gleaned from close listening to Imagining America's constituencies, through which I tried to distill the premises and aspirations of the new consortium, phrases like "public scholarship," "public work," "the project," "the huttle zone," and "the co-creation of knowledge."

Now David has invited me to report on the state of Imagining America, four years later. He has pushed me to "tell IA stories" about campus-community partnerships in the arts and humanities that have become sustainable. And, knowing my obsession with "the project" as the platform for public scholarship and art, he has asked for stories about projects that "have become chain reactions."

IA's mission blurb, I admit, does not entirely inflame the imagination. But it does summon creative people to purposeful democratic work that is practical about professional and institutional realities:

> Imagining America is a consortium of colleges and universities dedicated to strengthening the public role and democratic purposes of the humanities, arts, and design. IA supports publicly-engaged academic and creative work in the cultural disciplines. It works to advance the structural changes in higher education that such work requires and to constitute public scholarship as an important and legitimate enterprise.

Imagining America (IA) is now a consortium of about 80 colleges and universities. Launched in 1999 at a White House

Conference, IA was constituted in its present form in 2001. I am constantly called upon to explain its name. Our inaugural White House Conference was co-sponsored by the White House Millennium Council, which was presided over by then First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton. She took one look at the lugubrious name that we had bestowed on our effort, "Town-Gown 2000," and insisted that we get unstuck from old binaries and come up with something more optimistic. Hence Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life.

I split my time between directing IA and teaching classes that examine and, whenever possible, actively produce cultural "public goods." In these classes, as a collaborative effort, we test out the claims of this mission statement. In them, I put my money where my mouth is. The mission statement itself is sifted from the accumulated experience of public-minded scholars, artists, teachers, students, and their many community partners— the people who are changing the production—and the politics— of cultural and humanistic knowledge. By the time their work is distilled into the blah-blah of missionese, its punch and grace are lost. But "civic professionals" (using Scott Peters' indispensable term for public scholars) continue to set my personal standard of civic and professional accountability.

In September 2005, Imagining America published a study of excellence in campus community partnerships, *Making Value Visible*, based on eight focus groups at IA campuses with academic and community collaborators. The report reveals a flourishing world of work, populated by faculty artists and scholars; staff members of nonprofit organizations and public cultural institutions; and creative citizens working through robust networks. *Making Value Visible* opens a window on the thriving, stressful, but often invisible economy of project-based collaboration in the cultural disciplines. Most importantly, the report conveys a crucial truth about democratically conducted and publicly consequential cultural work: *excellence is a negotiated social experience of creativity and agency.*

> Focus group participants try to articulate what excellence feels like when it is approached as an intentional social encounter with other people's creativity and one's own, driven by a negotiated public purpose, with concrete results—including theory-building and debate. Treating excellence in this way starts to account for the motives that draw university-based civic professionals to such

work. At the core of excellence is learning and knowledge-making through "reciprocal relationships," often defined by spatial mobility, or "the shuttle zone." Collaborations move project team members to new locations—for meetings, meals, performances, oral histories conducted in family homes, quests through archival collections, debating in public libraries, painting in public settings, presenting at academic conferences. Moving between places means moving between roles and rhetorics, as well.

Chain Reactions: Communities of Practice, Communities of Knowledge

I told David Brown four years ago that individual public scholars and university programs dedicated to public scholarship in the humanities and arts typical-ly move forward through chain reactions that link one project to the next. This process of structuring work through chain reactions of projects is crucial to sustaining personal and institutional engagement. In order to understand how "sustainability" operates, we need to focus on how this works.

Practitioners testify to the way in which projects address a core purpose that is not contained or limited by one project. Any given project, therefore, while finite in time, generates relationships that carry over, with substantial continuity, into subsequent projects. These project chain reactions are important models, more important for the work of Imagining America, at this point, than examples of terrific stand-alone projects. Cumulative sequences of projects that have given rise to fresh ideas and expanded collaboration have a better chance of becoming contagious enough to change institutions and professional habits.

The Boyle Heights Project in Los Angeles

One of the best examples of a sustainable chain reaction of this kind is the Boyle Heights project in Los Angeles (LA), led by Professor George Sanchez of the University of Southern California (USC). Sanchez, a leading scholar in Latino, Ethnic, and American Studies, is a member of IA's Tenure Team Initiative lead-ership body and a former president of the American Studies Association. Imagining America published his recent address,

"Crossing Figueroa: The Tangled Web of Diversity and Democracy." He argues that there are two pathways to democracy in U.S. higher education: first, engagement by the university through connections with specific communities and publics, and, second, access to the university for members of all communities and publics through inclusive admissions and hiring policies. Sanchez challenges our understanding of how engagement and diversity are connected—and, increasingly disconnected. How, he asks, will universities "sustain [their] credibility among the urban neighborhoods and organizations that dominate the national landscape?" His answer is grounded in the powerful story of his own Boyle Heights Project, a partnership on the history of a multi-ethnic neighborhood in Los Angeles. The project brought together USC faculty and students, the Japanese American National Museum, public libraries, high schools, and other community organizations over a period of ten years.

As an assistant professor at the University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA), soon after the 1992 Los Angeles Riots, he developed a class whose "purpose was to understand the history of multiracialism in urban communities by exploring Boyle Heights, a neighborhood just east of downtown LA":

> Working with several community institutions…such as the International Institute, a social service provider in the neighborhood, Self-Help Graphics, a Chicano arts collective, and Roosevelt High School, the one public high school in the area, we collected names of individuals who had lived in Boyle Heights in the 1930s and 1940s, during its heyday as a multiracial community. The students learned about the work of these community organizations, and each picked an individual that they would extensively interview, placing this person's life in the context of the wider multiracial history of Boyle Heights. The histories that were produced by the students were then given back to each community member, as well as to the community institutions that we had interacted with…. Some students chose to interview members of racial groups that were similar to them, while others chose to interview across ethnic lines. The key was that we learned across those lines in our classroom, hearing about the individual stories from

the interviewers, and asking collectively about how each individual influenced Boyle Heights, while shaped by their own racial, economic, and personal background.

So the project began as a community service learning class focused on a campus-community project. Sanchez eventually moved to the University of Michigan, returning several years later to LA, this time as a faculty member at USC. Building on the organizational relationships formed during the original project, he reanimated the Boyle Heights initiative, fostering student teams that became key participants:

> I organized a research team investigating this multiracial history that led directly to an exhibition at the museum that turned out to be the single most attended exhibition in the short fifteen year history of the Japanese American National Museum. At one of the many community forums which this project organized, I witnessed our USC undergraduate and graduate students leading discussion groups…that brought together current residents of the community with former residents that had left Boyle Heights over fifty years ago. Sharing memories about the same location, these individuals bridged the racial, temporal, and geographic gap that exists in Los Angeles over common ground. When the exhibition opened months later, folks from all over southern California would come together again to share in these collective memories and think about what was in order to dream about what could be.

Projects have concrete objectives, embodied in products and actions. The possibility of expanding the project by working with new collaborators on new products can drive the progression from project to project, or from one project phase to the next. Sanchez's enterprise reveals the multi-mission logic of campus-community projects—the way that they bundle together research, teaching, and public engagement. As Sanchez enumerates the chain reactions that structured the work of the Boyle Heights teams, it is important to notice that he concludes with his own major scholarly project. This book-in-progress generated the paper that Imagining America published in its Foreseeable Futures series, as well as an article that received the 2005 best article prize from the American Studies Association:

> The exhibition inspired others, from Roosevelt High School students to elementary teachers in Long Beach, to construct their own historical projects looking at multiracialism in the past as a way to understand our 21st century future. In the end, this decade-long project produced a wide range of public scholarship from many

of its practitioners: a major museum exhibition, a teacher's guide made free to all teachers, high school student radio projects, undergraduate and graduate research papers, and hopefully, within a year or so, my own next book.

Propelling the chain reaction are highly specific acts of dreaming and imagination. Campus and community participants "could dream of a multiracial democracy within their midst" and could "imagine a time and place where folks lived side-by-side in Boyle Heights and were forced to work out their problem. They "dreamed of a Los Angeles of the future where this could happen in our lifetimes." And they brought this vision home to the university: "we imagined…democratic institutions where access and knowledge would not be limited by one's race or economic circumstance."

The 51st (dream) state *Project*

In the classroom last fall, our senior seminar syllabus, "Art and American Communities," assembled a diverse body of writings that take the imagination seriously as an element of democratic public life.

My collaborator in the project that formed the heart of my fall 2005 seminar, Sekou Sundiata, is a poet, theater artist, and professor of Creative Writing at New School University. Our work together took the form of a series of Citizenship Potlucks with students and poets, culminating in "Checkpoint: A Concert of Poets" held in the intimate auditorium of the Arab American National Museum on December 1st. What is Sekou's name for his work in progress? *The 51st (dream) state*, and its associated civic engagement programs, collectively called The America Project. He writes about the creative project of "looking for a clearing" within which to overcome the "estrangement between American civic ideals and American civic practice," which formed the basis for the class:

> Living in the aftermath of 9/11, I feel an urgent and renewed engagement with what it means to be an American. But that engagement is a troubling one because of a longstanding estrangement between American civic ideals and American civic practice. When it comes to a vision of myself as an artist and as an American, I am caught in a blind spot. I don't think I am alone. I sense there are many Americans in the same spot, probably in the millions. This project is my response to this reality. It is my way of searching for a clearing, for the necessary

Should readers of HEX *be interested in putting together their own study circle, the readings in my course included Harry Boyte's* Everyday Politics*; Robin Kelley's* Freedom Dreams*; Lani Guinier's and Gerald Torres's* The Miner's Canary *(centered on a politics of "magical realism"); Jacob Needleman's* The Soul of America *on the Founding Fathers; Richard Woods'* Faith in Action*, a study of the importance of culture— specifically, religious culture—to democratic politics; Martha Nussbaum's* For Love of Country*, on patriotism; Robert Frost's "Mending Wall," which engages in a kind of magical thinking, too ("We have to use a spell to make them balance"); and Langston Hughes' "Harlem" ("A Dream Deferred"). The syllabus also included the November 2001 issue of the NAACP's* The New Crisis*, on Black patriotism; Renato Rosaldo and William V. Flores's* Latino Cultural Citizenship*; John Kuo Wei Tchen's "Building a Dialogic Museum," about the Museum of the Chinese in America on the Lower East Side; David Brooks's* New York Times *column ("What visions originally excited me about politics and government?"); Cornel West's* Democracy Matters*; and Suheir Hammad's poem, "First Writing Since."*

questions to ask. I take it as a civic responsibility to think about these things out loud, in the ritualized forum of theater and public dialogue.

Sundiata's project has had a powerful ripple effect throughout Imagining America's member universities. Indeed, it is the inspiration for IA's Liberal Arts/Performing Arts Initiative. Indeed, The America Project, almost from the point of its emergence, has been intertwined with the work of Imagining America. The story of this project illustrates how IA helps its member campuses to find partners and models for public engagement through the arts—in other words, how IA makes chain reactions happen.

IA's national conference at the University of Illinois in Fall 2003 sparked the connections between then-Chancellor Nancy Cantor (now President of Syracuse), who was hosting and delivering the keynote address; Sekou Sundiata; and Gladstone (Fluney) Hutchinson, a Jamaican economist and Dean of Studies at Lafayette College. Fluney, a skeptical man, had been urged to attend by Ellis Finger, Director of Lafayette's Williams Center for the Arts. He listened hard to Cantor and Sundiata, and left the conference with his analysis of the place of the arts in undergraduate education fundamentally

changed. He wasted no time in re-inventing Lafayette's new student orientation and first-year studies programs. Now heading into its third year, the Lafayette model was developed in partnership with IA and even named *Imagining America*, with our blessings. It focuses on "the exploration of issues related to America's identity, human security, and civil society." Each year, summer readings and on-line discussions for entering students would be linked to the work of an artist in residence during the following academic year. Courses, campus events, and community collaborations were all structured around these residencies, with the Williams Center an ongoing partner. Sundiata was the first artist in residence for the new program.

Building new creative work is taking place during such residencies through interactions with students, community leaders, and faculty. Sekou's creative process is centered in dialogues about democracy sparked by poetry and music and undertaken in small groups. The residencies for *the 51st (dream) state*, like the one that took place between Ann Arbor and Detroit last fall, are organized around creative thinking about critical patriotism and about the personal and global meanings of America. Over the last three years, these creative residencies have occurred at the New World Theater of the University of Massachusetts; at the New School University; at Lafayette College; at the University of Michigan; and at Stanford. Some of what is produced takes the form of the artist's own reflections on conversations and stories; other portions take the form of quoted speech, visual images, or videotaped interviews. Local work loops back into the national project.

The performance work itself will have a double structure. When completed, it will comprise both the show and the engagement package (including citizenship potlucks and community sings facilitated by the company). During this phase, too, the national touring project can serve to put local engagement projects in touch with one another. These performance residencies are important partnerships. They will be collaboratively sponsored in Chicago by the University of Illinois-Chicago and the Institute for Contemporary Art; in Minneapolis by the Walker Art Center and the University of Minnesota; in Ann Arbor by the University of Michigan and the University Musical Society, an innovative nonprofit presenter. Elsewhere—at Lafayette, Bates, or the University of Maryland, for example—a strong campus arts presenter plays a leading role in crafting both academic and community links.

The 51st (dream) state is generating local public spheres that are specific to their time and place. It is also generating what David Scobey calls the ambitious "cosmopolitanism" of the new public scholarship. Sundiata's work is complex and brilliant, and it is provoking serious theoretical and intellectual response by scholars, students, poets, and community leaders. Arts presenters are called on to be active agents in democratic dialogues and are not content to define community education programs solely as weekday afternoon performances for school groups. Finally, colleges and universities are presented with a model for building imaginative engagement into individual courses, as well as into larger curricular formations like Lafayette's.

A More Responsive System: IA's Tenure Team Initiative

Maturing projects like these suggest that public scholarship centered on culture is becoming a distinct and viable intellectual is to understand what excellence means in this area—for faculty who are drawn to do it and for institutions that seek to encourage it.

IA's Tenure Team Initiative (TTI) is our most important initiative to date. We are taking literally our commitment to bring about the structural changes in higher education needed for public scholarship to flourish. This means introducing flexibility into tenure and promotion policies in an adaptive, evolutionary spirit. It is a mark of IA's organizational maturity that we are ready to take this on and able to assemble an impressive national leadership team.

TTI National Co-Chairs President Nancy Cantor and President Steven Lavine of California Institute for the Arts remind us of just how current policies can bite: "How many times have we heard, 'You'd better wait until you get tenure before you do that?' American higher education is recovering its traditions of public practice, yet we are not yet able to extend those traditions to our newest faculty."

These new faculty are feeling their way, improvising within existing tenure and promotion systems. An engaged ethnomusicologist at the University of Pennsylvania notes that, without adequate policies in place, she was left to fend for herself: "You have to educate your administrators, but that's no solution." Even her sympathetic dean had little guidance for her, beyond suggesting that she "put one paragraph about this work" in what one senior

administrator called her "very strange" dossier. Her case was successful, and she is now tenured, but still troubled by the process.

A member of the dance faculty at Rutgers describes his predicament as he approaches tenure. "I'm coming up for review in the dance department: So what do I do? ….I'm an oral historian in the community. Does oral history methodology count as the co-generation of knowledge? I make performance works based on oral histories. Who are the peer reviewers for that? I asked four different department chairs 'what is praxis?' and got four different answers."

Deans and department chairs have questions, too. One dean seeks models: "Are there lessons to be learned from clinicians and social workers and sociologists?" A dean of Arts and Sciences, a scientist, queries, "We typically look for the second book or the second grant. So how about public scholarship? Don't we ask, what is the next project?" A third plays devil's advocate, asking, "Has the question already been asked and answered a priori about the value of public scholarship?"

The Tenure Team Initiative's launch was marked by vigorous assertions to both faculty and deans that the initiative would lead to recommendations that are unflinchingly serious about research, scholarship, and creative activity. As David Scobey, Chair of IA's National Advisory Board, writes, "It is time for partisans of academic public engagement to spell out its intellectual claims" to "deliver the goods." He calls on us to demonstrate, through policies and practices, "the salience, intellectual richness, and political significance of the movement for academic public engagement."

Many elements of public scholarship challenge current tenure and promotion policies, especially factors related to campus-community partnerships. Developing partnerships takes time to set up and sustain, so the temporal horizon of such work often does not fit the standard productivity calendar. The spatial economy is distinctive, too. Conducting activities at off-campus locations makes engaged faculty less visible to colleagues. The knowledge model is different, based on co-creation. So who are the peers in peer review for this type of work? Collaborations yield a variety of products of very different kinds. Public scholarship integrates diverse types of faculty work, blurring teaching and scholarship. How do policies deal with these two strands when combined in complex projects?

I asked four different department chairs "what is praxis?" and got four different answers.

"These are solvable problems," says David Scobey. He tells the story of his own "professional practice" portfolio, as an urban historian in a department of architecture. He gave his department the names of academics who could assess his portfolio of campus-community public scholarship projects across several humanities, arts, and design fields.

The project portfolio strategy can be adapted by humanities and art departments, along with other cross-disciplinary translations. This kind of change happens constantly. The Modern Language Association is recommending that tenure policies for literature faculty accept articles, as well as books, responding to profound changes in academic publishing. Getting tenure for producing creative work in the arts became possible only in recent decades. And, as Scobey notes, "Our conversation about 'What is public scholarship?' and 'How do we figure out if it's any good?' resembles the same conversations in Women's Studies thirty years ago, when people were grappling with the daring new mix of the personal and the political in that domain."

Public scholarship in the cultural disciplines is an important interdisciplinary area. Now that there are increasing numbers of faculty who have gained national reputations as public scholars and a growing cohort of outstanding leaders in public and community organizations who are equally sophisticated about collaborative intellectual and cultural projects, peer review for engaged work in the cultural disciplines is becoming easier.

Some universities already have policies that are attentive to work like Sanchez's Boyle Heights project of Sundiata's *51st (dream) state*. This trend suggests that institutional leaders are recognizing that public scholarship's power to integrate research, teaching, and engagement is a dimension of excellence. The policy of Portland State, for example, is to accept blurred boundaries and to caution against confining faculty engagement within narrow categories:

> One should recognize that research, teaching, and community outreach often overlap. For example, a service-learning project may reflect both teaching and community outreach. Some research projects may involve both research and community outreach. Pedagogical research may involve both research and teaching. It is more important to focus on the general criteria of the quality and significance of the work than to categorize the work.

It is more important to focus on the general criteria of the quality and significance of the work than to categorize the work.

And the guidelines of the University of Illinois assert that the logic of publicly engaged academic pursuits can be a positive benefit:

> Much as the research…of individuals may positively affect their teaching and public service, so too their involvement in public service may positively serve the purposes of their research and teaching.... This interaction among teaching, research, and public service can contribute significantly to the vitality of the institution, its colleges, units, and departments, as well as to the vitality of its individual faculty members.

These excerpts from tenure policies are encouraging signs of flexibility, but they are not enough. The pressure is on universities, faculty, and Imagining America to "deliver the goods." This means, for faculty, specifying the intellectual caliber of collaborative cultural work that is 'about citizenship.' For institutions, it means connecting the university's public mission to its scholarly mission in ways that are appropriate to artists and humanists. And, for Imagining America, it means setting forth policies that are fully adequate to the new economy and the new politics of cultural knowledge.

IS DEMOCRACY PART OF HIGHER EDUCATION'S CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY

By Harris Dienstfrey

Civic Responsibility as Service

In the early 1980s, many in higher education came to believe that higher education was failing to meet its civic responsibility. The concern centered on two situations in particular.

The first situation was national in scope—the widely discussed decline in the numbers of young people voting in presidential elections. From the presidential election of 1972, the first time that 18-to-20-year olds could vote for a president, to the presidential election of 1980, the percentage of young voters 18-to-24 years old dropped a full 10 percent, from 50 to 40 percent. The drop caused much dismay. So did the attitudes behind it. A majority of college students told pollsters that politics had no importance in their lives and that they had little interest in it. It seemed to the concerned observers in higher education that the young people they were educating were not being educated in the value of voting, and were increasingly disinclined to engage in politics of any kind.

The second troubling situation was more specific to higher education—the sour disapproval that more and more of its institutions received from their surrounding communities. Since the establishment of land grant schools in the 1860s, higher education in general had accepted, as one of its prime civic responsibilities, the service of passing on to local communities useful knowledge developed through academic research. Now the academy was hearing from angry local communities that it was failing in this service. Not only did the communities view the knowledge and help they received from the academy as irrelevant; they had come to think that the academy itself was irrelevant to their most pressing concerns.

The disapproval was widespread and overt. In 1995, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation agreed to a request of the National

Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges "to examine the future of public higher education." The result of the multi-year examination, led by presidents and chancellors of state universities and land grant colleges, appeared in 2001. *Returning to Our Roots*, as the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities called its influential report, put the disapproval of public higher education this way:

> We face … growing public frustration with what is seen to be our unresponsiveness. At the root of the criticism is a perception that we are out of touch and out of date…. [P]art of the issue is that although society has problems, our institutions have 'disciplines.' … [W]hat these complaints add up to is a perception that, despite the resources and expertise available on our campuses, our institutions are not well organized to bring them to bear on local problems in a coherent way.

As many in higher education thought about the declining political interest of young voters, on the one hand, and the harsh dislike of local communities, on the other, they came to see a common thread in both situations—a failure of service. In regard to the declining percentage of young voters, they thought a large part of the problem was the Good Samaritan type of community service that public higher education required of its students. Such service, it was said, did nothing to promote informed and active citizenship. What was needed was an *expanded* form of service— service linked to classroom learning that would provide a connection to citizenship. If students performed the traditional type of community service like helping out in a soup line, the service should not end there. It should be extended to the classroom, where the students should learn about the conditions that contributed to persistent poverty or about social programs that had a good record in alleviating poverty. Service learning, as the expanded form of service was called, quickly became higher education's most prominent method to meet the civic responsibility of preparing students to be citizens.

The failure of public higher education to meet the needs of local communities similarly came to be seen as the product of a too narrowly conceived form of service. Again, the Kellogg report, made this point strongly, in what would become its most influential pronouncement.

> [T]his Commission concludes that it is time to go beyond outreach and service to what the Kellogg Commission

defines as "engagement." By engagement, we refer to institutions that have redesigned their teaching, research, and extension and service functions to become even more sympathetically and productively involved with their communities…. Inherited concepts emphasize a one-way process in which the university transfers its expertise to key constituents…. By engagement the Commission envisions partnerships, two-way streets defined by mutual respect among the partners for what each brings to the table. An institution that responds to these imperatives can properly be called what the Kellogg Commission has come to think of as an "engaged institution."

"Engagement" along with offshoots like "engaged institution" and "engaged campus" swiftly became the watchwords by which higher education has come to frame its efforts to fulfill its civic responsibilities. In the process, service learning, which predated engagement, has been subsumed as a dimension of an engaged campus.

There is no question that higher education has strived to understand and meet its civic responsibilities. The question is, has it been fundamental enough in its analysis?

The aim of this discussion is to describe another approach to civic responsibility, one that is also situated in the academy but off to one side. Where the service-oriented approach that higher education favors sees service at the heart of its civic responsibility, the alternative approach sees the invigoration of democracy. Where the currently favored approach sees the practices of service learning and engagement as the means to meet the end of civic responsibility, the alternative approach sees the practice of deliberation as the means to the civic responsibility of fostering democratic involvement. This alternative approach might be dubbed democracy-through-deliberation.

Democracy-Through-Deliberation

Democracy-through-deliberation is hardly a new invention. It is rooted in the American experience, and it roughly parallels American history. Its origins are in the town meetings most famously associated with New England. But it existed across the growing country in other forms. The historian Robert Wiebe identifies collective self-rule, another name for democracy-through-deliberation, as an expression of the "radical new principle" of American democracy, which infused the country

until the second half of the 19th century, when collective modes of self-rule began succumbing to the new assembly line-like organizations of industry and urban life.

As American society and life became more compartmentalized, fragmented, and bureaucratic, the town meeting process in which citizens chose among self-determined options no longer seemed possible. In the 1930s, John Dewey said "the most urgent problem" of democracy was the public's need "to find and identify itself."

In the 1950s and 60s, in the United States and other industrial societies, democracy-through-deliberation received a short resurrection under the label of participatory democracy. Worker's groups wanted participatory democracy in their unions and in industry in general. Briefly effective in some European countries, the participatory democracy movement had less effect in the United States.

Instead, many of those most interested in democracy-through-deliberation found a home in the academy. Deliberation, with the aim of stimulating a citizen-driven democracy, was taken up by any number of philosophers, sociologists, historians, and a mixed array of participants in variously named university service programs. The interest spread. Today, it has expanded into a small constellation of groups, most with links to the academy, which promote deliberation to promote democracy.

Promoters of Deliberation, Promoters of Democracy

In the 1980s, much of this expansion began through efforts to increase the active participation of citizens in democracy. Many deliberation-oriented observers of American life had become convinced that the habits of democracy had seriously weakened and that trust in government was wearing away. The problems they saw were problems the country at large had recognized—that voter turnout had steadily declined for nearly two decades and that many people were "turned off" by what they described as a politics of gridlock and big money. What set them apart is how they saw the source of the problems.

They took the view that the citizenry's broad disenchantment with politics and government was caused by the fact that ordinary
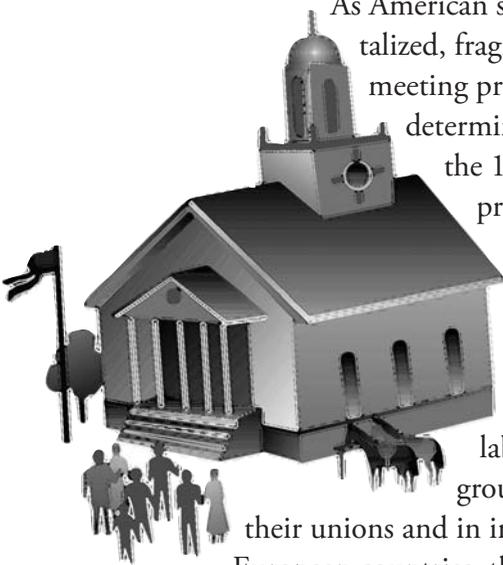
people no longer had the regular opportunity to shape the policies that ruled their lives. Instead, the primary contribution of ordinary people was as voters, and as voters, they basically had become consumers with a single-item shopping list that consisted of buying A or B. Beyond making this choice, as critical as it might be, ordinary people had little say about the ongoing policies and politics of the country. They could only hope that their presidential "purchase" would work as promised.

They believed that a good way to begin to repair the broken connection between citizens and public policy was to help create situations in which groups of citizens could talk with each other to work through issues of common public concern. In other words, they bet on deliberation.

The result was the National Issues Forums, a network of organizations and institutions that sponsors deliberative forums on issues of national concern. The forums are based on discussion guides (sometimes called issue books) that present at least three and sometimes four approaches for dealing with an issue, thus avoiding the A versus B opposites of most political arguments. The guides further identify the pros and cons of each approach, emphasizing that every approach has limitations, that choosing one approach over another entails a weighing of benefits and costs, and that every choice involves values and hopes for the future as much as it involves facts.

Since the early 1980s, the National Issues Forums has issued an average of three discussion guides each year. Their subjects range over the landscape of contemporary concerns, and the organizations and institutions that sponsor forums and otherwise make use of discussion guides span the educational and professional spectrum.

Institutions of higher education are among the most active users of the guides. Many teachers and administrators who use the material are associated with extension services—that is, the service component of higher education. Broadly speaking, they believe in democracy, they consider deliberation a valuable tool of democratic self-rule, and they appreciate the opportunity to promote the use of deliberative processes to help people on campus or in a surrounding community think through and resolve difficult and sometimes contentious problems.

Toward the end of the 1980s, the National Issues Forums suggested to teachers and administrators who used the Forums material that they consider taking their interests a step further by

creating institutes or centers to promote deliberation. Essentially, their task would be twofold: to spread the habit of deliberation as a tool for democratic decision-making and to document the results.

The idea had appeal. The first institute was established in 1989. By the end of 2002, 31 institute-like entities existed in 28 states. Most are associated with institutions of higher learning, a few are associated with civic organizations.

From this varied group have come innumerable research reports, most narrative in form, about the democratic effects of deliberation among different populations, small and large, in communities, classrooms, and campuses. They are a growing repository of information about what democracy-through-deliberation has achieved.

Three Community Stories: Summaries of Deliberative Efforts Suggest the Possibilities

### From Policing Drug Abuse to Improving Community Life (Northwest Independence, Missouri)

In Northwest Independence, an old working class, industrial area in Missouri that was suffering from high levels of drug and alcohol abuse, including extensive underage drinking, the police from the city of Independence, which controlled the Northwest area, imposed an uncompromising policy of zero tolerance. Though the residents of Northwest knew they had a serious problem, they resented the imposition by fiat, one more example, to them, of having no say in the policies that ruled their lives.

Northwest's Community Development Council had already been in contact with the Outreach and Extension Program at the University of Missouri for help involving the general community in critical issues, and they asked the University, which had a Community Deliberation Program, to organize community discussions about drugs and alcoholism and the policy the police had imposed.

Through a series of four deliberative meetings, attended by adults, young people, law officials, and community leaders, the residents of Northwest explored three community options to deal with abuse, one being the policy of zero tolerance. By the end of the meetings, the residents, working with law enforcement, had succeeded in integrating the police policy into a larger program of

resident-run community improvement. What the police had first seen as a problem of crime, now, through a deliberative exchange, had come to be seen by residents and police alike as a problem of building a stronger, more involved community.

Three years after the start of the program, drug and alcoholism abuse had declined, and community residents, who had continued a relaxed relationship with safety officials, remained active in identifying and addressing the needs of their community. A member of the University's Community Deliberation Program who helped organize the initial meetings, described the main civic outcome this way: "The community is now on the front end of decision-making, rather than just having it happen and being left with the results."
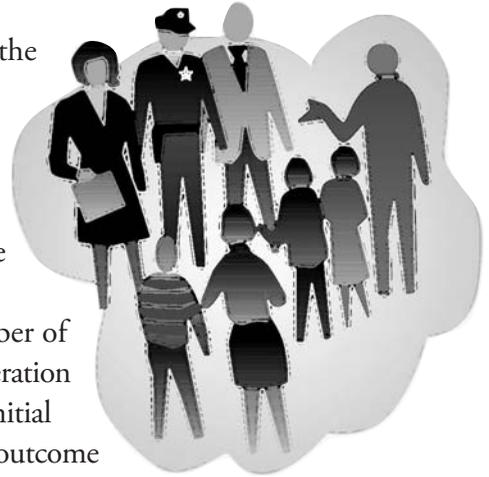
From Uniontown to Uniontown Cares (Uniontown, Alabama)

In 1999, the outreach department of Auburn University began what they hoped would be an economic development project in the impoverished and racially polarized Alabama town of Uniontown. They organized a planning committee to determine future goals for the town. The mayor headed the committee, and appointed the committee members. Despite the urging of the Auburn team to encourage public involvement, the committee spent most of their time discussing where to obtain the money to fund the goals they had set.

In an early session, the group, after failing to persuade the new mayor to remove some dilapidated buildings, assertively decided that they would go ahead and clean a vacant lot on their own. But when the day for the clean up arrived, the group found that the mayor had already had the lot cleaned and was proceeding with "additional efforts" to make it more attractive.

This episode changed the group's perception of themselves. They realized they had the power to bring about change through their own activities. Since then, guided by their collective understanding of the town's problems, they have worked with officials, organizations, and other citizens to bring about a series of

changes. They decided that a serious problem of loitering was really a problem of alcoholism, and arranged for a local Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) chapter. They succeeded in bringing in a regional group of volunteers to renovate several homes and turn a building into a library. In a town without a newspaper or a radio or public TV station, they began a website to function as a community bulletin board.

Citizens in Uniontown, unlike citizens in Northwest, did not begin their discussions with an organized deliberation to discuss three options. Instead, they began more like a town meeting than a deliberative forum. Uniontown is an example of the everyday deliberation and self-rule that is open to any group of citizens once they sit together to decide what they collectively can do to improve their community.

(For more on the Uniontown project, see Christa Daryl Slaton's "The University Role in Civic Engagement," *Higher Education Exchange*, 2005.)

Setting Goals, Making Choices, Taking Action (Rindge, New Hampshire)

In the half century ending in 2000, growth altered the town of Rindge, New Hampshire. Population, now at 5,300, increased nearly 700 percent, housing stock nearly doubled, and the percentage of land for commercial and industrial uses more than doubled. Many residents worried that further growth would destroy Rindge's small town heritage. In 2000, the town, drawing on the deliberation-promoting institute at the small liberal arts school that was Rindge's largest employer, Franklin Pierce College, began an ambitious three-year deliberative project to identify the future Rindge that the residents wanted.

In its own terms, this extended project was a clear success. Over a three-year period, residents of Rindge, in varying numbers, talked with each other about the future of the town. They chose four actions that they thought could help realize the future they wanted. In different ways, formally and informally, they presented their choices to the town, and the town, in one form or another, made its decisions. Everything came through the citizens and was decided by the citizens. This was democracy at work.

The town's experience of deliberation has had other effects. The school board has started to conduct what it calls forums, to hear concerns of the public. After years of bitter, seemingly

Everything came through the citizens and was decided by the citizens. This was democracy at work.

irresolvable conflict between the school districts of Rindge and an adjoining town about building a new high school, the districts began a series of deliberative discussions to find "common ground."

Is more to come? Could deliberation become a habit in Rindge? If not, why not? These questions point to the limits of today's knowledge about deliberation and democracy.

 (For more on the Rindge project, see Douglas Challenger and Joni Doherty's "Living in the Lap of an Immense Intelligence," *Higher Education Exchange*, 2002.)

Is Service or Deliberation Better for Democracy?

If much is not known about whether or how deliberation might become a regular practice, the reports just summarized show that much is clear about what it can achieve. They suggest a series of questions that a proponent of deliberation might put to proponents of higher education's expanded-service orientation.

The first question is probably obvious. Can the approach of expanded service lead to more democracy—which is to say, to greater involvement by citizens in determining the policies and programs that affect their common lives?

Today's expanded-service orientation to civic responsibility is certainly better than the service practices that went before. It is certainly better that students learn something about the communities to which they offer their services. It is better that they are no longer put in the position of being casual benefactors to unfortunates on the other side of town. It is certainly better that the faculty members offering service to members of a sur-rounding community treat them as equals rather than as people who cannot make the right decisions for themselves. But it is hard to see how these improvements (in understanding and civility) can lead to more democracy. Even if service learning on an engaged campus led to a massive increase in the numbers of young people who voted, it is hard to see how this would mean more citizen-driven democracy.

Which leads to a second question: Does higher education care? This may be an impolite question. Higher education obvi-ously is in favor of democracy. In the main, it obviously wants its students to become citizens, and it wants its service faculty to have a relationship with the community and not an arrangement of experts doling out information.

Still, it is a puzzle why public higher education has chosen to fulfill its civic responsibility as it has. For example, why has the academy devoted its energies to informing students about the world of the people the students aid, assuming (1) that this information will mean higher participation in voting, which in turn (2) will mean a richer democracy? Both propositions are thin reeds. Why does higher education not devote its energies to a direct effort to foster the *practice* of democracy among its students, to teach them an active, citizen-involved democracy they might look to practice as citizens?

Here are two more questions to nudge higher education into the deliberative democracy approach to civic responsibility that this paper has discussed. Is there anything in the arsenal of higher education's approach to civic responsibility that can achieve the results in democratic self-rule that deliberation brought to Northwest, Rindge, and Uniontown? Might it not be worthwhile for the proponents of the expanded-service approach to civic responsibility to walk down the hall to see what the proponents of deliberative democracy are doing?

LEARNING IN THE PLURAL

An Interview with David Cooper

David Brown, coeditor of the Higher Education Exchange (HEX), *asked David Cooper, professor of Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures at Michigan State University (MSU), to explore how a growing commitment to democratic learning has shaped his views on scholarship, teaching, and challenges facing the contemporary humanities.*

Brown: I'm doing an interview with Adam Weinberg, Dean of the College, at Colgate, about their "civic education as public work and residential education." They consider their work in residence halls as similar to a model at Michigan State where students learn to "guide their communities into becoming self-authoring, self-managing living areas" and "to work together to build a community that anchors their lives." What are your impressions and experience with such a model at MSU?

Cooper: The climate of support and encouragement for such work ebbs and flows, driven, in large part, by changing jet streams of campus leadership. We're in a flow cycle right now.

Having worked on early plans to establish a new liberal arts residential college at MSU, and with several years of teaching experience in three purposeful learning communities on campus, I can attest to the considerable difficulties campuses face in growing the kind of living/learning communities that Dean Weinberg is talking about at Colgate. One concern I have is leaving the public work ethic up to residence life staff and co-curricular programming, and then hoping that students develop a passion for civic learning and engagement that carries over into their coursework, shapes their intellectual growth, colors their world view, and maybe even influences their choice of majors and career paths. One thing I've learned from the national service-learning movement is the critical importance of building synergy between co-curricular arrangements and serious academic study and reflection. Getting student life professionals and faculty to join hands in sustained efforts is always problematic, especially at a large

research university where those two cultures are—regrettably, in my view—often separate and isolated and sometimes at odds. One of the most daunting challenges, of course, is finding a distinctive signature and a galvanizing idea that is big enough to define a collegiate learning community, sturdy enough to anchor a curriculum, and intimate enough to make a life for students, faculty, residence hall staff, allied student service professionals, and community partners. You have to lay a solid fretwork for a unique learning ethos to take hold.

Brown: Do you have an example of a living/learning community that attempts, much less succeeds, in pulling together all those factors? You're right: the way you put it, it seems like a daunting task.

Cooper: I tried to align those variables last year in a proposal for a Commonwealth Residential College (CRC) at MSU. I have been increasingly concerned, especially among the core humanities disciplines, that issues of identity, inclusiveness, a nd multiculturalism have become ossified into familiar debates about *who* is a citizen. The work of Harry Boyte and my former colleague Eric Fretz and others raises questions for me about another important dimension of citizenship that has received too little attention: namely, *what* is a citizen? What do citizens do? And how can we educate students for the work of citizenship?

I took the idea of a commonwealth—growing out of a distinct idiom in American history and culture shaped by classic liberalism—and positioned it at the center of a four-year residential college of public liberal arts. The work of citizenship in a commonwealth is a labor in public problem solving and the co-production of public goods: the creation of "common wealth." It is a work-centered philosophy of democracy in which authority and responsibility for public decision making resides with ordinary citizens. And then I laid out a vertical curriculum with the commonwealth ethic as a central axis. In the first year, for example, students would take a foundation seminar on the commonwealth idea that emphasizes formation of their majors and explores what Dean Weinberg referred to as the "self-authoring" and "self-managing" living arrangements that make a residential college stand out and apart from the other hotels on campus. Students would then track into a sequence of "commons" seminars that would fulfill their campus general education requirements.

The third year would focus on the global commonwealth and include a semester of study abroad. And, in their senior year, students would write a capstone thesis or produce a creative project addressing the impact of their career aspirations on sustaining the commonwealth idea.

When we started, you expressed concern with "leaving the public work ethic up to residence life staff and co-curricular programming…." Does that mean that such professionalism doesn't fit your model of a residential college of public liberal arts?

Cooper: There is a "professionalism" consistent with the commonwealth ethic. At MSU, it's as close as the brick monuments erected at the entrances to our sprawling campus, daily reminders that all of us work at the nation's "Pioneer Land Grant College." The land grant ethic, above all else, is a recipe for how to be a professional. Its ingredients include institutional loyalty and stewardship, commitment to skills and practices that serve the commonweal, application of knowledge and talents to the civic sphere, the pursuit of scholarship and learning that impacts the local community and the larger society, the interplay of professional duty and communal memory, and much more. This imprint of professionalism traces back to the original 19th century notion of a corporation as an enterprise chartered in and for the public welfare. Land grant "professionalism," then, melds can-do pragmatism, respect for advanced skills, and competency certification with a democratic humanism that makes the professional an ally in the great and continuing project of social egalitarian reform.

Of course, this is not anywhere near the standards of professionalism that one obtains either in the contemporary academy or the business community. Those standards—as blasted by liberal progressive academics like Burton Bledstein, Christopher Lasch, and Bruce Wilshire—owe allegiance to processes of socialization that lead to and legitimatize institutional meritocracy, monopoly, niche competition, exclusion, privilege, and so on—authoritarian forms completely antithetical to land grant egalitarianism. As such—and this is my point—a residential college built on the commonwealth ethic and Dean Weinberg's notion of "civic education as public work and residential education" is, almost by definition, a conscientious and self-critical—I hesitate to say "soul searching"—outfit from the vantage point of the contemporary institution as a whole.

Brown: Are new alignments of faculty, students, and residence life professionals possible at a contemporary research university of the size and enormous complexity of a Michigan State?

Cooper: I'd say they're not only possible, but they're *necessary*. Michigan State University has had its own unique institutional history with living/learning experiments, including James Madison College founded in 1967 and still flourishing, along with other cluster colleges started at the same time that didn't last as long. More recently, we have seen residential options for undergraduates spring up all across campus. They are aligned to common majors in the colleges of Arts and Letters, Engineering, Agriculture, and Natural Sciences. Most significantly, last October our Board of Trustees approved a new stand-alone residential college at MSU that will welcome its inaugural class in the fall of 2007. With a strong focus on intercultural engagement and global perspectives, that proposal—shaped by more skillful hands than my own—is a couple iterations removed from my original commonwealth pipedream. But its emphasis on such things as liberal arts learning in the public interest, synergies between residence life, faculty, students, and strong community partnerships, the curriculum as an incubator for democracy, and so forth, certainly advance the notion of public liberal arts education in the service of democratic renewal. I have great hope for this experiment.

Brown: I read your draft proposal for a Commonwealth Residential College where you argued that the idea of a commonwealth implies an "ecological ontology: every individual action and decision has public consequence." If that's the case, I'm left wondering what isn't "public?"

Cooper: In the context of a residential living and learning community anchored by a commonwealth ethic, I'd have to argue, somewhat ungrammatically, that not much can't be public. But this is not to say that students won't have challenging opportunities to enrich their personal lives. In fact, I think I have a better opportunity to develop a deep and resonant inner life when I am held accountable to a communal sense of shared responsibility and mutual destiny.

My vision of a residential college restores a dynamic between the public and the private that is at the heart of both the commonwealth ethic and the practices of deliberative democracy. I find wisdom and possibility in the paradox that our private worlds and our public lives belong on the same continuum.

One of the things I most admire about the National Issues Forums or NIF-style of public deliberation, for example, is the way it respects and elevates personal experience in the calculus of public problem solving. Whenever I have the privilege of moderating a public forum, I am always amazed at how powerful personal stories can be and how essential they are to good forum work. Asking participants how a particular issue impacts them personally or what personal experiences have shaped their perspectives on an issue … these are absolutely crucial foundations for deliberation. I believe this reciprocity between what people care about deeply and passionately and the hard work of hammering out the political will it takes to get people acting together taps into the wisdom in the paradox that the private and the public are intimately connected and symbiotic. Measured by their influence on the public mind, some of the most exemplary citizens of our era are, for me personally, individuals who are in full possession of their inner lives, people like Thomas Merton, Dorothy Day, Robert Coles, and Richard Rodriguez.

Brown: So what are the implications of that way of viewing private and public life for undergraduate education as envisioned in your CRC proposal and the Colgate model where students work together to build a community that anchors their lives?

Cooper: At one level, the relationship between the private and the public—viewed as a fundamental problem of moral obligation, ethical purpose, professional development, and civic conduct—is what liberal education is all about. That is the business of a curriculum. It is the work of a faculty. It is inherent in the specific disciplinary knowledges and methodologies we teach and, equally important, it plays out in the kind of collegial life we pursue together. I can't imagine a humanities curriculum that doesn't challenge students to develop their deepest moral convictions while simultaneously engaging their ethical obligations to the commonweal. That's got to be what we mean by the much-used phrase "engaged learning practices." The purpose, after all, of colleges and universities is to help one generation after another grow intellectually and morally through study of the world around them and through the self-scrutiny such study should prompt.

Brown: How do your colleagues respond when you argue that ethical practices are the business of a curriculum and the work of a faculty? Does that lead to quarrels about what constitutes "ethical practice" in the Academy?

Cooper: It certainly should. Such quarrels are healthy and necessary. I understand "ethical practice" as bound up in a pragmatic question: "How am I obligated?" The humanities disciplines, in my view, have neglected that question of moral praxis for the past couple of decades in favor of a brand of high theory more concerned with matters of power, authority, and identity. There is a real difference, however, between radical theories of social transformation, identity politics, and cultural production currently much in fashion in today's critical market-place and the gritty spade work of democracy. A neglect of application and inattention to praxis—the bulwarks of ethical pedagogy and democratic change—even prompts Richard Rorty to complain about the arid material cranked out by an unselfcritical theory industry out of touch with human needs and interests.

But I do sense a real awakening, maybe even a genuine soul-searching, in the academy and especially among humanists spurred by this loss of public purpose and relevance and the recognition that the vast majority of contemporary humanities scholarship is absolutely unintelligible to a literate public. Concerted efforts are underway to shore up the declining cultural capital of the humanities. Nationally, for example, Imagining America, an organization founded and currently directed by Julie Ellison at the University of Michigan, is leading the way with exciting pro-grams of renewal aimed at arts and humanities teaching, scholarship, and performance as cultural work in the public interest. At its last national convention, the out-going president of the Modern Language Association—the poster child for out-of-touch academics— organized several well-attended forums on the future of the humanities. Much frank and painful discussion took place around the contemporary humanities' neglect of public purpose and responsibility and loss of authority and respect in the eyes of the public.

Other national organizations have devoted similar energies to repositioning the humanities into closer contact with problems and issues that confront the public today, including the

2004 AAU report on reinvigorating the humanities and the American Council of Learned Societies, groups not particularly known for their civic activism and agitation for public engagement. Even at MSU, we've organized a fledgling Public Humanities Collaborative that we hope will eventually serve as an intellectual commons where civic initiatives with local impact are coordinated, critically examined, affirmed, and systemically fostered throughout the university and the mid-Michigan community.

Brown: In your writings, I see a willingness on your part to be vulnerable and remain so which seems contrary to professional specialization that is meant to make us relatively invulnerable. What makes you so willing to entertain and accept such vulnerability? Is it an inherent self-confidence that you brought to the Academy or something else?

Cooper: I don't think it has much to do with any courage or native self-confidence on my part. It may have more to do with my interdisciplinary training—a willingness to traffic outside the safe perimeters of an academic specialization—or the influence of a sound liberal arts education, or maybe the value I have placed on using writing—even conventional scholarship—as a vehicle for self-exploration and discovery. One of the things I learned from my greatest teacher—Giles Milhaven, an ex-Jesuit who recently passed away—is that no question is ever strictly academic. All lines of inquiry converge on some felt dimension of our lived experience. I try to approach every class like that and read every book that way, from *The Volkswagen Repair Manual for Complete Idiots* (don't laugh—it's a classic!) to Toqueville's *Democracy in America*. Good teachers like Milhaven struggle to make classrooms places that count. He famously insisted, in his own memorable words, that "students are sharks and my job is to bloody the waters." Maybe the same thing can be said for readers and the obligations of the writer.
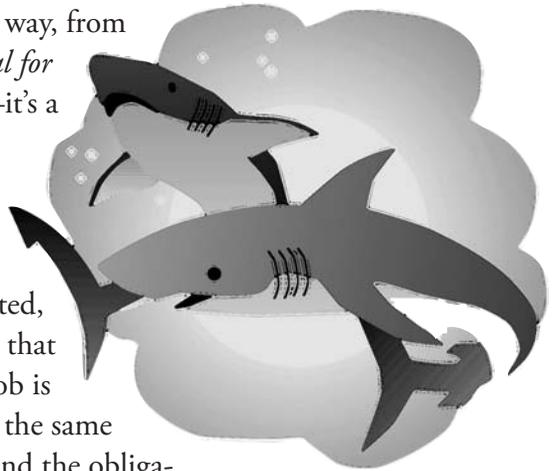
What comes across in my writing as a penchant for vulnerability may be more of an acquired habit of asking the difficult questions and following them no matter where they take me. Some of my

writing in the last ten years, for example, results from the friction between what I imagined the humanities to be twenty-five years ago and what they have become. I've asked questions that make me squirm. For example, how can I learn to write and teach with integrity, agency, and heart in an intellectual climate in the academy that has become much too cerebral, too detached and abstract, too much *in the head*? Where can I find a community of fellow practitioners for whom ethical purpose and what Erik Erikson called "generativity" (he essentially meant leaving the world in better shape than we found it) are central to career commitment and professional life and not objects of postmodern derision or signs of philosophical bad faith?

Tough questions always make you vulnerable. And, paradoxically, they always center you.

Brown: In your HEX 2002 piece, "Bus Rides and Forks in the Road: The Making of a Public Scholar," you quarrel with the "skeptical lens of postmodernism." Many of your colleagues may have had similar academic journeys like yours, and yet they have used the postmodernist lens in their work. What accounts for your apostasy?

Cooper: Postmodernism is an exceptionally slippery term. It's like Jabba the Hutt: monolithic while formless. It takes on different meanings in different contexts. It means one thing in, say, Literary or Cultural Studies and something entirely different in Theology or Art. What I pointed out in that essay was that I had emerged from a period of personal crisis and professional dislocation in my late 30s that set me on a professional course at odds with the fashions of scholarship in the humanities at the time—what I called the skeptical lens of postmodernism that it seemed everyone was using as a sight-line of cultural analysis and literary scholarship and as a source of critical vocabulary. For example, I was fired up with moral purpose as a teacher/scholar at a time when moral language had all but disappeared from the prevailing lexicons of critical theory to be replaced by heady, muscular terms like "interrogation" and "construction." Similarly, I was drawn to the possibilities of public scholarship just about the time most Cultural Studies scholar/critics were calling for liberation from suffocating and, in their view, dangerous "tropes" like "public" and "commonweal" and other grand narratives of cultural imperialism and class oppression. I couldn't get behind the idea that the social arena is essentially predatory any more

than I could *interrogate* a poem or a work of art. In many ways, the object of postmodern scholarship is the mirror opposite of public scholarship. The public scholar asks "how can the practices, methods, and conventions of my disciplinary scholarship yield knowledge that contributes to public problem solving and public creation?" The strategy of postmodernism is to wrench us from what one critic called the "charted and organized familiarity of the totalized world."

I was beginning an intellectual love affair with democracy while my mostly younger colleagues were conflating "democracy" and "dominant culture" and arguing that the consensual agenda of democratic institutions effectively eradicated diversity and made democracy a tool of hegemony. I could go on and on. The point is that I found my place in the academy was similar to how Thomas Merton described his predicament as a best-selling author living in a cloistered monastic community: a duck in a chicken coop. I suppose you could see that position as one of "apostasy." I prefer to view it as a creative tension, a crucible where commitments are forged and tempered.

Besides, the ideological and political agitation and the proletarian sympathies of so much academic cultural analysis struck me, at the time, as empty posturing without an activist agenda. This is why I was drawn to the service-learning movement: there I found colleagues with calluses on their hands and solid track records of activism and public work in communities and neighborhoods outside the privileged, safe havens of their campus seminars.

Brown: That leads to your work in response to a writing task force at MSU when you argue that "I would shift the ethical center of gravity … from excluded discourses to enlightened discourses, from hegemony to liberty, from self-interest to the maintenance of the public good, from The Other to one another."

Cooper: The writing task force report is a good example of what I mean. I was reacting there to the way the task force framed our writing program's responsibility, in the words of the task force report, "to respond to changing and diverse populations." I thought that imperative lost some of its ethical urgency in favor of showcasing familiar theories of difference and exclusion and the notion that language is a social construction that the strong wield over the weak.

For example, the task force noted that "academic discourse and standard written English have excluded a multiplicity of voices alive in the American discourse for centuries." As such, "we must recognize the power and potential of historically excluded discourses of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and disability." I questioned the way the imperative of diversity had to be hard-wired to the *exclusion* of diverse voices. The implication is that our writing program could redress that deplorable situation by merely "recognizing" the power of historically excluded "discourses." It seems to me that the real imperative here is much more ethically complex, intellectually challenging, politically useful, socially cathartic, and rhetorically engaging than that. In a fervor to honor historically disenfranchised voices, we don't want to *exclude* rhetorical practices and linguistic processes essential to making democracy work. For example, the power of public deliberation, or the linguistic and rhetorical processes that diverse groups use to make hard choices together, gain clout and presence, achieve compromise, promote better understanding across lines of race, ethnicity, class and much more. Civic and public literacies, it seems to me, are far more challenging imperatives to "respond to changing and diverse populations" than merely opening up the canon in a freshmen writing class and putting Frantz Fanon and Paulo Freire on our reading lists.

I pointed out to my colleagues that a writing course, such as the one they proposed, that put heavy emphasis on exploring and understanding conflicting purposes in an argument and uncovering unstated rhetorical positions would likely produce good debaters and maybe even good cultural critics who would be skilled at finding weaknesses in another position, proving the other guy wrong, finding flaws in another position, bushwhacking their opponent, and coming up with counter arguments. But I questioned whether it would produce good deliberators who can search for strength in another position, who are compassionate and concerned for others, who listen well and can find grounds for agreement, who respect and advance the difficult business of building consensus. I reminded the task force that the communities—rhetorical and *real*—where our students live their lives and many of the actual rhetorical situations in which they find themselves as writers call on them to search for common ground, act through compromise, make decisions among imperfect and incomplete choices, and search for ways to achieve and maintain social cohesion and harmony.

Our students, to be sure, need to know how to see through glib ideologies of common sense that cloak the trappings of abusive power and the maintenance of the political status quo. The problem here is that students might be led to the conviction that powerlessness is a virtue. For me, the key question for a socially engaged writing program is not *how* to recognize historically excluded discourses but *what* enables diverse voices to find legitimate courses of public action that are consistent with what is valuable to the community as a whole—and not to shirk the language of consensus-building out of fealty to postmodernism's dislike of foundations and its insistence that narratives of wholeness are insidious cartoons of privilege and hegemony. That's what I mean by shifting the ethical center of gravity from "The Other" to one another.

Brown: In *About Campus* (2001), along with Elizabeth Hollander and Richard Cone, you argued that "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 and ethical claims that inform the climate of values and techniques in our classrooms." How do you do that in your teaching?

Cooper: You try to model democratic practices and processes in the classroom that cut across everything from the construction of a syllabus to assessment and evaluation. I always try to keep in mind Myles Horton's reply when he was asked to sum up the style of learning at the Highlander School. "When you believe in a democratic society," he said, "you provide a setting for education that is democratic." What would our classrooms—indeed, our entire learning community at our universities and workplaces— look like and how might our vocation as teachers change if we seriously undertook Horton's deceptively simple charge?

My experiments with democratizing the classroom suggest that a democratic pedagogy that Horton has in mind must operate at multiple levels. It means, first and foremost, linking students academic learning with experiences of democracy-building and public work, learning that is rigorously contextualized and grounded in action. Familiar examples of such interactive pedagogies include service-learning, collaborative learning, problem-based learning, and employing the strategies and principles of democratic deliberation such as study circles and forum work.

Beyond technique, I've learned that you have to foster a complete learning culture and cultivate a self-image as a teacher that

are consistent with these classroom practices and don't unintentionally undermine them. Giving my students, for example, the authority, responsibility, and resources to organize and conduct a public forum closely related to course content can be undermined by decontextualizing their learning in other areas of the course or shifting elsewhere to a competitive standard of assessment or evaluation, or adopting a conflicting persona as a "professor." When students become active agents in the creation of meaning and knowledge formation, my role has to shift from authoritative information giver to co-learner or facilitator. This is one of the claims routinely cited in the recent literature on "learning communities" when looking at how role expectations evolve after moving from the teaching to the learning paradigm.

My best advice to young teachers is to get out of their students' way.

Unless you're an exceptionally gifted teacher who can move almost invisibly between shifting personae, I don't think you can swap those roles back and forth without damaging your integrity in your students' eyes and, worse, without getting in the way of their learning. Whenever I conduct a self-assessment of my courses, I hardly ever ask, "How well am I teaching?" The critical question for me is "What am I learning?" My best advice for young teachers is to get out of their students' way.

Brown: I'm interested in pursuing a distinction you made in the form of a question in your HEX 2004 piece, "Education for Democracy: A Conversation in Two Keys": "What forms of civic engagement 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?" Are you saying that the civic/political grounds that older generations use to judge the "service politics" of a younger generation are not preferable, just different?

That essay was an occasion for a conversation with *The New Student Politics: The Wingspread Statement on Student Civic Engagement*, which had just been published by Campus Compact. One of the things I admire about the Wingspread Statement is that it gives me a political profile of the current generation of undergraduates that is both more coherent and more complex, and therefore more useful to me as a teacher, than what you find in stock demographic analyses. The Statement is a useful and important counterweight to the familiar claim that students today are apathetic and disengaged. So what I am saying is, yes, our students do bring different energies, perceptions, preferences,

expectations, and practices to the ongoing work of democracy, work that both binds generations together and, at the same time, transcends generational differences. For students today, democracy is participatory, interpersonal, intimate, place-based. Students put more moral emphasis on the social responsibility of the individual in a democracy than on, say, the movement politics of the noisier and more iconoclastic Boomers. The perceived disconnects and contrasts between our current students and the Boomer juggernaut, in my view, is a counterproductive exercise in generational narcissism. It does not help me meet the challenges of educating for democracy and laying the foundations in my classrooms for life long civic habits. I have to meet my students where they are and not where I've been. I need to accept—even *honor*—their disillusionment with conventional politics and respect their disengagement as a conscious choice and not a default position imposed on them by their professors.
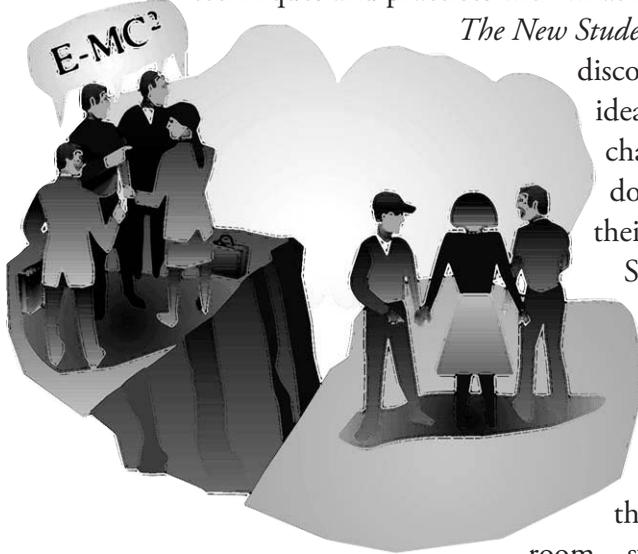
Brown: You pursue such distinctions when speaking of the "paradox" that "our students hate the idea of civic engagement, but they welcome opportunities to become engaged." Does this mean that they are better activists than they are students seeking to know about civic traditions of activism; that for them the classroom is an inferior space for such learning?

Cooper: It means that our students' cynicism, skepticism, pessimism, and rejection of politics as usual are more perceived than real. If we are going to succeed in "teaching liberty," as Benjamin Barber puts it, we have to find a way to transform that observation from a criticism or a lament or an exercise in nostalgia into an informing paradox. Sure, my students are, for the most part, cynical, pessimistic, wired to mainstream popular media, and completely put off by conventional politics. But, as study after study has shown, they are not part of a generation that is civically disengaged, ethically adrift, or bent on wrecking our social capital. We have to ask: what do those paradoxes or ironies mean for our teaching practices? Let me give you an example of what I mean.

I recently took part in an external department review at another university. I sat in on some writing and literature classes. In one section of introductory literature, students were immersed in a very sophisticated skein of ideas about fiction and theories of social control, about characters and the social construction of identities, and about the dynamics of social class that were playing out in plot lines. I made a careful review of the syllabus (it was

elegant) and assignments (they were thoughtful and articulate). But I also came away surprised that while students were parsing important ideas, say, about racial or gender oppression they were never invited or challenged by their professor to become publicly or socially engaged in those issues as they are lived out and suffered through in their own local community.

My view is that we must do a better job, especially in the humanities, of closing this gap between the world of ideas that animates faculty culture and our students' preference for concrete applications of knowledge and for active methods of learning. We need to find new and better ways of aligning pedagogical techniques and practices with what I pointed out in that essay on *The New Student Politics* as the rupture or disconnect between action and ideas that, for better or worse, characterizes our students' predominant learning style and their practices of citizenship. Such alignments include the use of active and interactive teaching and learning practices. I am experimenting, for example, with a deliberative pedagogy where the learning ethos of the classroom—syllabus construction and management, assignments, assessment, heuristics, architecture, everything—is modeled after that of a public forum, and my role as teacher becomes that of a moderator and my students become agents and participants in the productive public work of the course.

Other promising alignments include the use of active and interactive teaching and learning practices that are the subject of much discussion in the learning communities movement. We need to better integrate the curriculum with active research opportunities for undergraduates instead of using the undergraduate classroom as a site where we download our research expertise. Students need to be viewed as active producers of knowledge and agents of democracy and not primarily as passive consumers of information. Above all, we have to attend to those features and flaws of the campus culture that the Wingspread students point

out as detrimental to civic involvement: the degree to which uncontested skepticism, for example, is valued and rewarded, the absence of idealism, or the disconnect between the university's professed "mission" and its actual relationship and behavior toward the surrounding community.

Brown: It's always a pleasure to talk with you, David.

FIVE EMERGING PRACTICES IN THE SCHOLARSHIP OF ENGAGEMENT

By Derek Barker

More than ever, higher education professionals are starting to describe their work, using the words "participatory research," "public scholarship," and "community partnerships." In fact, words like these are being used in the titles and mission statements of centers, programs, and other initiatives to broaden the idea of scholarship and deepen the connection between higher education institutions and the public realm. For the past few years, I have been tracking these projects, as well as the work of independent scholars who have similar approaches. I see an exciting group of academics trying to make the case that civic work makes for good politics—and good scholarship. Civic work helps scholars generate more practical research questions, enables them to collect more data, and allows them to see their ideas working in practice. Engaged scholars are finding that their practices are not something they do on the side in addition to their academic research. They embrace different methods and emphasize varying aspects of democratic politics, but their work can be understood and assessed as a "scholarship of engagement."

Five emerging practices are showing how higher education professionals can expand the idea of scholarship and enrich the political life of their communities. Each one is animated by a specific theory of democracy, and as a result, each one uses its own methods to address a specific set of public problems. What distinguishes these practices is the intent of the scholar, not the methods they employ. While academic scholarship is often driven by the training and expertise of the scholar, engaged scholars are driven by what they intend to accomplish. By thinking about the scholarship of engagement along these dimensions, my intention is to provide a clear and systematic framework through which to understand and assess the work that makes up this movement, while also recognizing its diversity.

The scholarship of engagement concept was first stated in the work of the late Ernest Boyer, who served as president of the Carnegie Academy for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning. Boyer's work was dedicated to expanding the idea of scholarship beyond research published in peer-reviewed journals, in order to recognize and value all the things that academics actually do. One of Boyer's later works took a further step to argue that the idea of scholarship could be broadened to include the scholarship of engagement: practices that overlap with the traditional areas of scholarship but also incorporate practices of collaboration with public entities.

So what does civic work have to do with scholarship? What is "scholarly" about the scholarship of engagement? By linking civic work to scholarship, this terminology reflects a growing awareness that civic work can further academic as well as political goals. On the research side, scholars are making contributions to their field by using methods that incorporate civic work. Rather, civic work is woven into the research process itself, a critical component of the scholar's methodology.

Practices of civic work can also make a difference in what Boyer calls the "scholarship of teaching." For a long time, the service learning and experiential learning movements have been showing that students can benefit from seeing the ideas discussed in the classroom applied practically in the outside world. What the scholarship of engagement adds to these pedagogies is a conscious effort at building deeper relationships with communities beyond the idea of "service," which does not always lead to more enduring forms of engagement. The scholarship of engagement attempts to provide students with greater insight into the nature of public problems by asking students to practice more intense forms of democratic citizenship. Although these practices are often present implicitly in service and experiential learning programs, they are explicitly and consciously cultivated by the scholarship of engagement. In these ways, far from compromising their seriousness and rigor, engaged scholars are making the case that their work meets or even exceeds traditional norms for assessing scholarship.

The Scholarship of Engagement: Five Emerging Practices

So what do engaged scholars do? How does their work contribute to democracy? The scholarship of engagement is distinct

from traditional approaches, because it integrates practices of civic work into the production of knowledge. It is different, for example, from traditional academic scholarship that simply has to do with civic work. The scholarship of engagement is also distinct from public intellectual scholarship, which takes traditional academic literature and attempts to give it greater visibility in the media. Rather, the scholarship of engagement means finding creative ways to communicate to public audiences, work for the public good, and, most important, generate knowledge with public participation.

To accomplish these goals, engaged scholars are embracing a number of methods and the terminologies that go with them. Unfortunately, such diversity can make for a daunting task when it comes to understanding and assessing these practices. In order to make sense of these approaches, I decided to proceed inductively, to find out how scholars are describing their own work and to see if any patterns can be identified. I found five emerging practices (see Table 1).

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Table 1: The Scholarship of Engagement: Five Practices

Practice	Theory	Problems Addressed	Methods
Public Scholarship	Deliberative Democracy	Complex "public" problems requiring deliberation	Face to face, open forums
Participatory Research	Participatory Democracy	Inclusion of specific groups	Face to face collaboration with specific publics
Community Partnership	Social Democracy	Social change, structural transformation	Collaboration with intermediary groups
Public Information Networks	Democracy (broadly understood)	Networking, communication	Databases of public resources
Civic Literacy Scholarship	Democracy (broadly understood)	Enhancing public discourse	Communication with general public

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First, *public scholarship* is most often used to describe academic work that incorporates practices of deliberative politics to enhance scholarship. Public scholars are usually informed by some combination of the "deliberative" or "participatory" theories of democracy developed by thinkers such as John Dewey and Jürgen Habermas. In contrast to "participatory research" and "action research," however, public scholarship generally emphasizes deliberation over participation—the quality of the discourse rather than the quantity of participants. A common public scholarship practice is the open public forum. Forums typically address issues of wide concern, and, in particular, they address complex issues that require actual public discussion rather than simply voting or taking a public opinion poll. John Dewey refers to these sorts of problems as "public problems."

Several examples illustrate the ways in which deliberative politics can enhance scholarship. National organizations such as Study Circles Resource Center (SCRC) and National Issues Forums (NIF) use deliberative methods, often in association with civic work centers on college campuses. As Keith Morton and Sandra Enos tell us, these forums are often linked to coursework in fields such as political science and public policy, providing student participants with a powerful learning experience. Similarly, regional studies scholars at the University of Kentucky Center for Participatory Research and Democratic Planning used forums to draw citizens into the research process on issues ranging from local economic development to the folk traditions of their community. One of their programs, for example, used an innovative blend of forums, films, and humanities scholarship to bring awareness to the long-term impacts of highway development on the local economy. These scholars found that the level of public knowledge on this issue increased as a result of civic work and public deliberation. A group of environmental health scientists, including John Sullivan, recently found that by using community outreach and public forums, they could collaborate with citizens to monitor local environmental problems. As a result, the researchers gained access to new data sources, and their work was communicated more effectively to the community. Similarly, Nick Jordan and a group of sustainable development scientists recently found that their research on weed science is more effective when the farmers who use their research are involved in the process. By collaborating

with actual practitioners in the process of the research, these scientists found themselves addressing more urgent research questions with greater effectiveness. In all of these instances, scholars and students are finding new ways to enrich the scholarship process, generating new research questions and gaining access to new data sources through innovative practices of deliberative democracy.

The second emerging practice, very closely related to public scholarship, is *participatory research*, also referred to as "action research" or "participatory action research." Like public scholarship, participatory research stresses the active role citizens can play in the production of academic knowledge. The main difference I see between the two stems from the relative emphasis on participation versus deliberation. While public scholars are more concerned with enhancing the quality of public participation in research, for participatory research the emphasis tends to be on promoting participation itself. Participatory research tends to respond to problems of exclusion by reaching out to a marginalized or previously excluded group. For example, Kathy Mordock and Marianne Krasny define action research as "a process of research in which an oppressed group of people or a community identifies a problem, collects information, analyzes, and acts upon the problem in order to solve it and to promote public transformation." These practices have developed alongside "activist" criticisms of deliberative democracy, like those of Iris Marion Young. These critics argue that deliberative practices tend to force marginalized groups to compromise, preventing radical solutions from emerging. Since the emphasis is on including a specific group in research to solve a specific problem, the deliberative methods of public scholarship, such as open public forums on universal issues, are less appropriate. Despite their differences of emphasis, however, public scholarship and participatory research often overlap and can supplement one another, depending on the nature of the problem that is being addressed.

Like public scholarship, participatory research is showing that good politics can make for good scholarship. The weed scientists mentioned above described their work using the public scholarship terminology, but also drew heavily from participatory research scholarship, as well as from the concept of "public work." Similarly, participatory research is the preferred paradigm used by the scholars at the Center for Democratic Planning at the

University of Kentucky, cited above, although their methods overlap significantly with public scholarship. Participatory research and public scholarship are not so much opposed as they are responding to different problems in democratic politics. Situations may call for building bridges to specific groups to bring more participants into the process, or they may call for improving the quality of discourse of existing groups. Engaged scholars are finding innovative ways to blend these approaches in response to specific problems.

Third, the scholarship of engagement includes practices referred to as *community partnerships*. Public participation and deliberation may be key components of community partnerships, but the primary emphasis in this field tends to be on cultural transformation. As a result, one might say that community partnerships are animated primarily by a conception of democracy. In contrast to other forms of engaged scholarship, community partnerships are especially concerned with power, resources, and building social movements. While community partnerships often overlap with public scholarship and participatory research practices, this approach tends to emphasize the end result of social transformation over the process and its political qualities.

Community partnerships are animated primarily by a conception of democracy.

Harry Boyte, of the University of Minnesota's Center for Democracy and Citizenship, describes his community partnership practices as "public work." Scholars there engage in a range of community projects, and through their experiences, contribute to scholarly literature in fields such as political theory, public policy, and sociology. Ira Harkavy, a leader in this field and Director of the Center for Community Partnerships at the University of Pennsylvania, describes his work as a conscious effort at "going beyond service learning" by accomplishing structural transformation through comprehensive institutional commitments linked to teaching and research, a goal which is only sometimes explicitly stated in service-learning practices. Again, other scholars use a combination of community partnership methods and practices drawn from other forms of engagement. For example, the weed scientists described above, also describe their public scholarship as a form of public work, showing that deliberative politics can be a crucial component of social transformation.

Fourth, many of the scholarship of engagement centers are creating *public information networks*. These networks typically help communities identify resources and assets by providing comprehensive databases of local activists, advocacy groups, and available

services. While these programs do not always stress the iterative and deliberative quality of the forms of engaged scholarship, they use university resources to better inform public judgments and enrich the quality of discourse. Public information programs are best suited to deal with situations in which the resources already exist in a community to solve a problem, but they are not being utilized effectively due to a lack of organization or communication. Examples of this approach include the Seattle Political Information Network of the Center for Communication and Civic work at the University of Washington, and the Democracy Collaborative's Information Commons at the University of Maryland.

A final approach to the scholarship of engagement emphasizes *civic skills* and/or *civic literacy*. Regardless of one's specific conception of democracy, any healthy democracy requires at least a minimal competence in knowledge of political institutions, economics, and science and technology to make educated and informed decisions. Scholarship conceived as an expert practice reserved for a few specialists further undermines the public's capacity for effective participation. Engaged scholars in this field are helping to enhance democratic processes by ensuring that their disciplines are supplying publics with the knowledge necessary for reflective judgments on public issues. This approach again aims at deepening practices of engagement with the specific aim of reducing the separation between expert specialists and the lay public, as well as by its specific emphasis on skills that are relevant to political participation and democratic decision-making. At the same time, civic literacy approaches differ from other forms of engaged scholarship by targeting relatively broad and long-term trends in general public knowledge rather than specific and immediate problems. Project Pericles of Macalester College is one exemplary service-learning program with a specific focus on civic learning. Natural scientists, like Stuart Lee and Wolff-Michael Roth, have also been increasingly concerned with ensuring that the public has an adequate understanding of science and technology so as to reach reflective judgments on those issues.

One sign that these practices are catching on as both good politics and good scholarship is the development of specific criteria for the assessment of engaged scholarship. Lorilee Sandmann and the National Review Board for the Scholarship of Engagement, for example, have been working in this field, serving as peer evaluators in promotion and tenure decisions. They try to identify practices of engagement with real scholarly value, not just "service" that is done on the side. Assessment work may impose challenging standards for the scholarship of engagement movement, but it helps make the case to promotion and tenure committees that practices of engagement are central to the research and teaching goals of the profession. Although assessment is not itself engagement (and I do not include it among the five practices), this work is a critical component of the engaged scholarship universe.

Conclusion

The reality of the scholarship of engagement universe is, of course, fluid and complex, and cannot be easily reduced into boxes. The terms I have identified do not have settled definitions. They are closely related and easily confused with one another, and at times, they are even used interchangeably. Moreover, these practices are by their very nature—and by the nature of democracy itself—experimental and in constant flux. Engaged scholars are not trying to set up a universal rule for the "best" method of engagement, but rather to respond to particular problems in democratic politics. All engaged scholarship addresses problems that are broadly "public" in nature, but some of them may be short-term and particular in nature, while others may contribute to the common good in broad or long-term ways. Engaged scholarship can emphasize the processes of democratic decision-making, or the substantive results of social transformation. Complete standardization would be neither possible nor desirable.

Still, a degree of clarity can help other scholars replicate these emerging practices, and shared meanings would help the field establish both intellectual and political legitimacy. In tracking the activities of higher education civic work centers, I have been finding that the concept of the scholarship of engagement has been catching on. On the one hand, it is focused enough to capture the distinct qualities and contributions of engaged scholarship. The scholarship of engagement is not something that academics do on the side as opposed to "serious" scholarship.

Engaged scholarship addresses problems that are broadly "public" in nature.

Rather, the scholarship of engagement has developed specific methods and criteria for assessment, and it is making identifiable contributions to academic disciplines on their own terms. On the other hand, the scholarship of engagement is an inclusive concept that reflects the great diversity in the theory and practice of this growing movement. The scholarship of engagement includes an exciting array of theoretical approaches toward the renewal of democratic politics, and it recognizes that teaching, research, and any of the traditional scholarly functions can be broadened to incorporate practices of democratic politics. Most of all, the concept is catching on, because it is both scholarly and political, capturing both aspects of a distinct, growing, and exciting movement.

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# FIRST DEMOCRACY: THE CHALLENGE OF AN ANCIENT IDEA

By Paul Woodruff

Anne Thomason, Reviewer

Do Americans truly practice democracy? We often speak with pride of our democracy and rarely question whether our system is in fact a democracy. But do we truly practice it? Paul Woodruff, in his recent book, unmasks certain practices that look like democracy on the surface but are, in fact, what he calls "doubles." He makes his claims by going back into history and examining Athenian democracy and the seven core ideas of democracy found there. According to Woodruff, these ideas include harmony, freedom from tyranny, rule of law, natural equality, citizen wisdom, reasoning without knowledge, and education. These ideas are what make Athens the "first democracy."

At times, Athenian democracy went astray, during times of war in particular, but Athenians endeavored to cultivate a clear vision of democracy— what it meant, how it should work, and what it should ultimately accomplish. According to Woodruff, the vision and constant debate over the ideas of democracy are absent in democratic societies today. People today need to rediscover a shared vision of the meaning of democracy, and how it should function. He ends the book with policy recommendations and a series of tough questions about how well the American system of democracy employs the seven ideas.

Woodruff identifies three of democracy's "doubles." These are ideas that pass for democracy but actually represent failures of democratic practice. These "doubles" include the practices of voting, electing representatives, and majority rule. For example, he
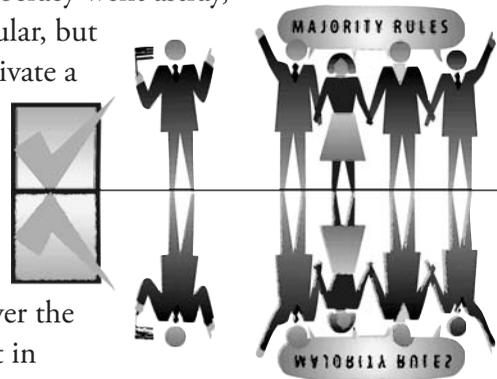
argues that voting is not democratic in a system in which an elite chooses the candidates. Indeed, dictators have often used voting to solidify their own power. If a dictator selects who runs for office from a pool of his faithful followers, voting means nothing, even if everyone can vote. And if only the wealthy can run for office, are the people truly represented? Woodruff says no, and in such a system, the democratic idea of natural equality is corrupted.

The democratic double of electing representatives is closely related to the fallacy of voting as democracy. Elected representatives often find themselves required to curry favor with their wealthy benefactors and special interest groups rather than the public as a whole. Not only will such elected representatives not represent the will of the people, but as we have seen in the United States, people lose confidence in the government when special interests seem to have endless lobbying power with both the legislative and executive branches.

The final "democratic double" is majority rule. Woodruff states that out of all the doubles, majority rule is most often confused with democracy and is thus the most "seductive" of all three. Majority rule is "merely government by and for the majority." As Woodruff says, "It's not freedom if you have to join the majority in order to feel that you are free." Majority rule leads us away from the democratic idea of freedom from tyranny. Freedom from tyranny not only frees the people from a dictator, but demands active citizen participation to allow people to achieve their own destiny. Thus to have true freedom from tyranny, all people must be active in governing themselves—if people refuse to participate, they will end up with a dictator ruling them.

Thus each of these democratic doubles is the result of ignoring one of the seven democratic ideas, as expressed in Athenian democracy. All seven of the democratic ideas are interconnected, particularly harmony and rule of law. Harmony requires three things to function in a democracy: "adhering to the rule of law, working together to seek common goals, and accepting differences." No citizen can be above the rule of law. When the rule of law is ignored, such as when a rich man escapes punishment for his crime while a poor man is sentenced to jail, harmony will be upset. Athenians came to the realization that they could disagree about anything—as long as they adhered to the rule of law and respected these differences. Without harmony, people see no reason to participate in government. Why bother

if your viewpoint is not considered or respected, or if others can rise above the law?

Natural equality, indeed, should prevent certain people from rising above the law. Whether born rich or poor, we are all human and thus share a common human nature. The basis of the argument is twofold: because we are human we possess the ability to govern, and also the need to take part in governance. If we are not allowed to participate, we are cut off from fulfilling our basic human potential. Aristotle argues such an ideal when he describes humans as political animals. He also believed the Athenian city state was the ideal, as citizens were given a means, and even required, to participate in government. Aristotle failed to see the limitations of the ancient Greek city-states, such as only allowing political opportunity to adult male citizens.

How did the ancient Greeks deal with the existence of slavery in their democracy? Woodruff demonstrates that the ideals of abolishing slavery existed in the poetry and can even be inferred in the writing of Plato, though he did not make the jump to abolishing slavery. As we see in early American history when the founders had the opportunity to abolish slavery when writing the Constitution, ideas often cannot catch up to the reality of the time. Neither ancient Greece nor revolutionary America could ride the tide of democracy over oppressive traditions that were deeply embedded in society. In Athens, for example, too many citizens had a financial stake in slavery. There are many examples of Greek poets and thinkers arguing or suggesting that women, foreigners, and slaves actually have rights and should be citizens; but these ideals never played out in practice. As Woodruff states, there was a critical division between theory and practice, and as he says, "That is not a happy way to live." Thus, while the ideals of democracy may be distinct from the practice, we should constantly be striving to narrow the gap between theory and practice.

Natural equality, as we have seen, shows that citizens have the ability to govern through what Woodruff calls citizen wisdom. Citizen wisdom is essential to democracy, Woodruff argues, for ordinary people possess the wisdom to govern them-selves. It is at the heart of democracy. How do people acquire this wisdom? It is part of human nature, personal experience, tradition, and education. Of course, unequal systems of education can lead to inequality in citizen wisdom.

Citizen wisdom is essential to democracy, for ordinary people possess the wisdom to govern themselves.

Closely connected to citizen wisdom is the idea of reasoning without knowledge. To be done well, it requires open debate, as "doing it (reasoning without knowledge) poorly is the fault of leaders who silence oppositions, conceal the basis of their reasoning, or pretend to an authority that does not belong to them." Citizen wisdom works hand in hand with reasoning with knowledge, which is explained by Woodruff as working out that which is most reasonable to believe. His argument is that "adversary debate, followed by a vote, is a rational way of handling murky issues."

Woodruff offers substantial challenges for our current educational system, which focuses on preparing people for jobs, but fails in teaching good citizenship. Students are not asked to consider the tough questions of democracy. Many students attend private and religious schools, and thus people do not share a common education or experience. Outside the system, many Americans claim to have divine knowledge and put their religion above everyone else's; the Greeks viewed such an attitude as hubris. Woodruff speaks gravely about fear—the public media has done a wonderful job creating "shared ignorance, shared fear, shared outrage" but not "shared compassion, shared commitment to justice, or shared reverence." These are qualities, he argues, that could be cultivated through education. Because of this, education (paideia) for all is a necessary component of democracy. And beyond education, citizen wisdom is essential, because no one politician can ever be trusted. However, the collective wisdom of all the citizens can be trusted—and maintained by the rule of law.

Athens did not succeed in all of these ideas of democracy. They did, however, debate these ideas, and they tried to have a democracy based on these ideals, even when they failed. Woodruff contends that in the United States today, we fail—to even consider these ideas, much less debate and dream about them. His book is a call for us to re-examine the struggles of democracy today through the experiences of Athens.

AFTERWORD

By David Mathews

The essays that I write at the end of each *Exchange* aren't intended to summarize the contents; they are to connect the articles to the Kettering Foundation's work. I imagine that is what most of you do as readers; you look at *HEX* with your own interests in mind.

Lately, the foundation has been preoccupied with reviewing the whole of its research. This type of review is done every three years in conjunction with an analysis of worldwide trends in democracy. Doing this broad analysis doesn't mean that we think we can respond to all of the problems facing democracy. Like any research organization, we have our own particular strengths. We do, however, look for the best fit between our lines of study and the major challenges to self-rule.

One of the first things we noticed in looking at trends is how many different concepts of democracy are implied in what people are doing these days. For instance, what our Chinese colleagues report on political democracy isn't the same as what our international fellows from South Africa talk about when they describe their democracy. As you were reading this issue of *HEX*, you may have noticed different notions of democracy implicit in the articles, even though all of the authors are from the same country and have a common focus on higher education.

It is easy for differences in meaning to go unnoticed, because the word "democracy" is used so widely today. Anne Thomason's review of Paul Woodruff's *First Democracy* brings some clarity to the definition by describing his thoughts on early Greek democracy. But the concept of rule by the people may go back even before the Greeks and can be found in other cultures. Democratic practices seem to have appeared before the term "democracy" was coined. There is archaeological evidence of villagers making collective decisions and acting on them in

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prehistoric cultures. And the Chinese word for democracy goes back to two ancient characters, one for sovereignty (as in kings) and the other for the people. That is almost identical to the way the Greeks fashioned their words for democracy.

Woodruff's *First Democracy* provides an excellent grounding for this issue of the *Exchange*, because he distinguishes between the norms of a political ideal (democracy) and the conditions in human society, which invariably fall short of the ideal. And, you will recall that Woodruff also rescues democracy from being confused with its doubles.

Today's discussions of higher education's role in democracy show how far we have moved from the original concept of self-rule. In some of the discussions, democracy is equated with a political system in which people rule themselves largely by voting, even though voting wasn't that central to early democracy. Other academics discuss democracy in social and cultural terms. They worry about lack of diversity and trust. Still others emphasize the duty of citizens to serve others and their community. And there are academics who argue that the quintessence of democratic citizenship is public work, not work done *for* the public but *by* the public. Citizens are producers of public goods, and they have to master the skills that are essential in production. In some of these discussions, democracy has a very personal, even moral, meaning; the focus is on individuals—taxpayers, voters, volunteers. For others, democracy has a collective meaning; groups, not individuals, are the primary units of democracy.

These different notions of democracy play out in different notions about higher education's civic responsibilities. In other words, the way colleges and universities understand their responsibilities varies depending on what academics think democracy means. For instance, the meaning of democracy that is captured in Michael Briand's article puts a premium on the production of knowledge in academia. Institutions of higher education, Michael argues, have an obligation to understand the kind of knowledge citizens need in order to rule themselves, even if it isn't just expert knowledge. Faculty members Adam Weinberg and David Cooper have a concept of democracy that bears on students and residential life. Julie Ellison focuses on the arts and humanities and, in the process, gives us an insight into her political concepts. (Reading her essay, I was reminded of how the Greeks used plays to get

across the values they associated with self-rule.) The institutions that associate democracy with public deliberation, as Harris Dienstfrey points out, have restructured their outreach activities accordingly.

Given the foundation's efforts to understand the major challenges to democracy, the *Exchange* helps identify the challenges academics see as critical. Derek Barker's essay is particularly helpful, because he provides a snapshot of five different problems being addressed in the scholarship of engagement. Each political problem implies a particular understanding of democracy—and they are all different. Identifying these differences is useful. Proponents of service learning, diversity, or public scholarship are naturally enthusiastic about what they are doing. What is most significant, however, about their efforts is not their projects so much as the understanding of democracy implicit in the projects. What is implicit needs to be made explicit.

Every civic project in higher education says something about democracy and the problems of democracy. How well higher education is meeting its responsibility to democracy can be determined by looking at whether these institutions are focused on the most fundamental and perennial problems challenging self-rule. For instance, take one of the most perennial issues: can "just folks" really govern themselves? Do they know enough to make sound judgments about their collective well-being? Nothing is a more telling litmus test for a civic project than how it understands citizens and what they should do. And the ability of people to govern themselves is not just an age-old issue; it is a very contemporary one as well.

In *Downsizing Democracy*, Matthew Crenson and Benjamin Ginsberg make the case that our political system has "sidelined its citizens and privatized its public." Evidently ancient doubts about citizens' abilities are still with us. This issue may or may not be addressed by various academic initiatives, even though they all may fly under the banner of democracy. Knowing how a given initiative proposes to get citizens off the sidelines, where it would place them in the political system and, ultimately, how it under- stands citizenship would be telling. So would knowing how an initiative understands the source of power that citizens have. Is the source of that power no more than the Constitution's assurance that the people are sovereign? Or does self-rule require that citizens have other sources of power that they generate themselves?

Take another fundamental issue in democracy, the challenge of dealing with highly charged moral disagreements. Political questions are, at their core, inherently moral because they are about what we *should* do. So moral disagreements are inevitable, yet unless there is some way to deal with them, political systems become deadlocked by polarization or degenerate into violence. (Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson have written quite a bit on this problem in the last few years; it is serious.) Is it enough to encourage toleration of differences? Knowing if and how different initiatives deal with this kind of conflict would also be telling.

I am not surprised or disturbed to find that different under-standings of democracy are implicated in various civic projects in higher education. One of the characteristics of democracy is an ongoing debate about what it is and should be. I am concerned, however, when we lose sight of what the debate is really about. There are no best practices that solve all problems, yet there are some issues so critical to the viability of democracy that how we deal with them now will affect our ability to rule ourselves for decades to come. How a college or university understands these critical challenges to self-rule is itself critical.

I hope this issue of the *Exchange* helps make more explicit what has been largely implicit in the discussion of higher education's relationship to democracy. The articles have certainly contributed to that deeper understanding without making the subject of democracy bloodless or, dare I say it, "academic." (Reread the interview with David Cooper and you'll see what I mean.) Something is happening on American campuses; it has to do with the way we govern ourselves. What kind of democracy these campus initiatives will foster is an open question at this point. As I have said in other issues of *HEX*, the answer may depend on whether initiatives on campus make ties with similar initiatives off campus. These off-campus movements go by a number of names, and they, too, vary in the problems they address. They range from public journalism to civic innovation to deliberative democracy, just to name three. What long-term impact all of these initiatives will have is impossible to say. Many will probably be assimilated into business as usual without any profound effect. (That often happens with attempts to change institutions and customs.) The chances that these initiatives will lead to a stronger democracy go up, however, if they are focused on democracy's most serious problems. The chances also go up if

all of us in this discussion realize that we aren't just dealing with the media, civic renewal projects, or deliberative dialogue any more than we are just dealing with residence halls, academic research, or the humanities. We are deciding what kind of democracy will emerge in the 21st century.

CONTRIBUTORS

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