Entrepreneurial Strategies for Advancing Arts-Based Public Engagement as a Form of University-Sanctioned Professional Activity in the New Creative Economy

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Abstract
Written in the first person and drawing from an autoethnographic methodological framework, this essay shares aspirations, experiences, and reflections on a faculty member's professional work in a large U.S. public research-oriented university, focusing specifically on her attempts to reconcile her service-oriented civic engagement work with her university's priorities and workplace conditions. The author positions her work within a larger community of practice in art education higher education, a community dedicated to embracing cultural diversity and social justice, and whose work now takes place in multiple sites, including but not limited to schools and universities. The author establishes linkages between contemporary art education values and aims, and recently popular writings about the creative class, the new creative economy, and the contributions of cultural creatives to community development. These connections help the author establish a personal philosophical foundation for her current work and to explore an entrepreneurial framework–both as a

means of facilitating her own public engagement projects and for advancing public engagement as a legitimate form of university faculty work. The essay is written as a reflective narrative about lessons learned in pursuit of these aims. Through utilization of short stories (or vignettes) of some of the author's public-engagement-oriented work, she identifies entrepreneurial strategies that have facilitated this work along with problems encountered, uncertainties, and failures. The essay concludes with an optimistic but untested proposition that university faculty members may make a difference in the world not only through their service-oriented civic endeavors, but also in their ability to help shape and improve university institutional conditions that make this work possible. As the author concludes, being connected to a community of practice beyond ones current place of employment is central to these goals.

Introduction

My professional work has long been concerned with the role of art education in civil society.[1] This work involves multicultural and community studies, collaboration with local agencies and schools, and development of educational programming based on these studies and collaborations. My inquiries and publications have been concerned with articulating a philosophical framework and describing principles of operation for aligning art education with contemporary notions about art, cultural diversity, and social change. My teaching has embraced and reflected these interests, and my professional service and public engagement initiatives have put my theories and teachings into action. This essay is about some of these professional public engagement initiatives. From the vantage point of my recent (2010) promotion to a full professorship at a large research-oriented public university, I provide an insider's story about forging a career devoted to public engagement as a viable component of a university faculty member's professional life, mine, that is, but it is my sincere desire that this account is helpful to other educators who are similarly interested in public engagement.

My strategy as a university worker has been to balance and blend the three facets of work (research, teaching, and service) that comprised the official terms of my contract as a university employee. Notably, although my research and teaching have been heavily scrutinized and evaluated on my campus through a variety of university-sanctioned measures, there has been almost no institutional review of my service or public engagement activities. As a result, I've been pretty much on my own in assessing the quality of my public engagement-oriented work. Adapted primarily from action research strategies, self-evaluation methods associated with my public engagement endeavors typically include keeping and analyzing field notes about events, activities and individuals who are involved in particular projects with me; engaging in conversations and formal consultations with participants about

their needs and perceptions; analyzing documents associated with projects and organizations (student work, organizational mission statements and websites, informational fliers and brochures, images, news articles, etc.); taking lots and lots of photographs; and utilizing a variety of program evaluation strategies (course evaluation data, surveys, focus groups, interviews, anecdotal feedback, and publications, including newspaper articles about my initiatives). Guided by questions and insights developed as my specific public engagement projects have unfolded, I have made adjustments both to specific projects and to my broader professional goals. My desire to do good work motivated these self-evaluations, which for me meant doing work that has value to others.

Linking my Work to my Professional Community of Practice and Establishing a Philosophical Base for Public Engagement

My professional work takes place not only within a particular institutional context, but also within a *community of practice* that extends far beyond my place of employment. A community of practice, in simplest terms, is a diverse, multilayered and varyingly skilled group of people engaging in similar professional activities–people who share their knowledge, tools and strategies, nurture their colleagues at all levels of participation, and advance their mutual goals through these associations and activities (Wenger, n. d.).[2] Both my research and my public service are informed through my association with my community of practice in art education. This association includes staying conversant with the writings and work of those whose values align with mine, and by sharing my ideas with colleagues in hopes of advancing our common goals. I note that, like me, many university level art educators hold conceptualizations of art education that embrace themes of reflective engagement, public outreach, and civil society.[3] Sites for our work include schools, early childhood and senior care facilities, museums, recreational facilities, nature preserves, hospitals, prisons, libraries, playgrounds, programs for the disabled, community organizations, cultural centers, businesses, governmental agencies, and the Internet, to name a few.[4] In recent years I have also found scholars in global studies, community development, and social entrepreneurship particularly useful in helping me establish a philosophicalfoundation for conducting my work. These interest resulted in a recent 40-chapter book I co-edited, entitled "Globalization, Art, and Education" and published by the National Art Education Association in 2009.

Connecting Art Education to Discourse on the New Global Knowledge Economy, Community Development, and Entrepreneurship

Late 1990s and early 2000s writings about social, economic, and cultural life in the 21st century have brought together emerging notions about human and social capital, creativity, and entrepreneurship. Writings focusing on what has been labeled *the creative economy* describe new social, spatial, ecological, and economic arrangements, the potential for wealth and job creation, and the characteristics, preferences, and skills of people who work in

creative industries. For example, in *The Rise of the Creative Class*, Richard Florida[4] (2002) describes ascent of a new social class he labels the "creative class", those educators, writers, artists, designers, musicians, architects, entertainers, scientists, and engineers, along with a broader group of creative professionals in business and finance, law, health care and related fields who by 2015 will comprise nearly 40 million workers or roughly one third of the workforce and more that 2 trillion dollars in annual wages and salaries. According to Florida, creative workers share common characteristics (they are educated, they work and play hard, and they value creativity, individuality, and diversity), and they generate new ideas, new technologies, and new creative content that has economic as well as cultural/aesthetic value.

In *The Whole Mind*, Daniel Pink[6] (2007) further describes skills and characteristics needed by these kinds of creative workers in the 21st century as *high concept/high touch*. According to Pink, high concept skills include the ability to create artistically and emotionally satisfying products, to detect patterns and unexpected opportunities, and to combine seemingly unrelated ideas into a novel invention. High touch skills include being able to empathize, to understand subtleties in human interaction, and to engage in the pursuit of purpose and meaning. The idea also promulgated by these theorists is that creative people, industries, and institutions are a major impetus in the *global knowledge economy*, and that the creative individuals driving and shaping this new economy have a high preference for technology, talent, and tolerance for diversity (Florida, Gates, Knudsen, & Stolarick, 2006). Countless reports and policy documents around the globe, in essence, support this view.[7] *Entrepreneurship* is central to this vision of the new knowledge economy.

Entrepreneurs are said to be *cultural creatives* who change society by creating new ways to live, work and achieve. Early definitions of entrepreneurship have been traced back to 18th century writings by French economists Richard Cantillon and Jean-Babtiste Say who described how entrepreneurs bought services at certain prices and sold them in the future at uncertain prices (Ochieng, 2008). Development of the idea of entrepreneurship in 20th century economic theory is credited by numerous scholars to Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter. In his oft-cited work, "The Theory of Economic Development", published in 1934, Schumpeter described entrepreneurship as an essential ingredient for the creation of new products and services in market economies, and entrepreneurs as the driving force for economic growth. In Schumpeterian theory, entrepreneurship is the creation by individuals of new combinations in the marketplace (the economic system) that cause a change (disequilibrium) in those systems and fuels economic development (growth). Successful entrepreneurial innovations lead to lasting changes in consumption and its related human behaviors, in business practices, and in the economic systems in which they are created. In Schumpeter's model, economic development equated with progress, and the good of society rested in the hands of entrepreneurs (Greenfield & Strickland, 1981).[8] This view remains

central to contemporary economic theory and to writings about entrepreneurship.[9]

Some economists and theorists question whether the new creative class described by Florida and other proponents of this view actually exists (Healey, 2002), or whether the creative sector will actually spur the economic development of cities and communities as predicted (Hodsoll, 2002). Other theorists challenge what they view as an outmoded essentialist paradigm, and the overtly deterministic assumptions that underlie many of the writings about entrepreneurship– research that classifies individuals and societies into types based on attributes, that equates economic development with progress, and that sees progress as both good and inevitable (Greenfield & Strickon, 1981). Setting aside these debates for the moment, *where economists and cultural theorists agree is that entrepreneurs are a vital force in local and global economies,[10] that they are indeed creative workers, and that further study of entrepreneurship is needed.*

Entrepreneurship involves the creation of new products, services, or processes. According to contemporary cultural studies theorists Roger Martin and Sally Osberg (2007), entrepreneurship requires the combination of (a) a context in which an opportunity is situated, (b) a set of personal characteristics needed to identify and pursue this opportunity (an *entrepreneurial disposition* or spirit), and (c) the creation of a desirable outcome of such magnitude that it brings about fundamental change with lasting significance. An *entrepreneurial disposition* refers both to a conceptual outlook and cluster of behaviors that include the potential to take risks, think big, discern meaningful patterns, and the ability to conceptualize, design, and carry forward concrete plans of action with specific intended outcomes (Martin & Osberg, 2007). Entrepreneurs, we are told, are good at creative problem solving, innovation, social networking, model building, and resource development.[11] Personal dispositions of an entrepreneur include a highly developed sense of self-efficacy, imagination, courage, social intelligence, and focused, undeterred determination. Entrepreneurs are open to the unexpected, have high tolerance for ambiguity, have a capacity to assess and modify plans, and the ability to convert barriers and challenges into advantages. They build, amass, and leverage social capital in pursuit of their entrepreneurial initiatives.[12] Failure or fear-of-failure do not truncate the work of entrepreneurs. Most importantly, entrepreneurs create something of value to others.[13]

The dispositions and behaviors of entrepreneurs bear a notable resemblance to those identified by popular writers Daniel Pink and Richard Florida as characteristics of the *21st century cultural creative*. Entrepreneurship involves creative thinking, innovation, adaptation, risk taking, resource development, value creation, and accountability to constituents and stakeholders. These may also be important strategies for arts-based public engagement endeavors.

How Well has an Entrepreneurial Disposition Facilitated my University-situated Arts-Based Public Outreach?

Although colleagues in the art education higher education community now embrace a notion of art education as a form of public work that reaches far beyond university and K-12 school settings, what may not be very well understood is how institutional opportunities and challenges impact the work of university level art educators who choose to meaningfully allocate professional time and effort to what university officials typically call "service". Here, I consider my own professional activities and context, utilizing insights gained from memories and experiences, evaluations, and self-evaluations. I share these considerations with questions about the sustainability of this work and with due regard for the interests of my place of employment, the university, one of the primary but sometimes overlooked *stakeholders* in discussions about the nature of our work.[14] Five vignettes highlighting selected public engagement initiatives provide material for both developing insights and identifying unresolved problems. These short stories include descriptions of and reflections about a research project titled Civic Friendships and Expressions of Local Culture in a Former Military Town in East Central Illinois; a museum outreach program called ArtSpeak; two university courses I developed and taught: Art, Community, & Civil Society, Museums-in-Action; and my off-campus courses offered to Illinois K-12 teachers.

Civic friendships and expressions of local culture in a former military town in east central Illinois. In 2007, I received a University of Illinois Faculty Research Fellowship from the Center on Democracy in a Multiracial Society (CDMS) to conduct a study of creative expressions and community building in Rantoul, Illinois, a nearby small town that has been dramatically impacted by the closure of its military base.[15] I was interested in finding out more about how individuals in Rantoul creatively express their life stories and aspirations; how they form alliances across racial, cultural, and economic divisions; how they engage challenges to community building; and where the arts fit in.[16] Now considerably more than a scholarly project, this research has made a direct and positive impact on the specific community of interest. This includes two recent national grants (a $10,000 National Endowment for the Arts grant that I co-wrote with a local artist, Lindsey Scott, for a Latino outreach center, and a $25,000 Lowe's Educational and Community Foundation Grant), and *ArtSpeak,* a University of Illinois Krannert Art Museum sponsored multicultural art education internship for Rantoul high school students.

ArtSpeak, now in its fifth year, is a multiculturally oriented educational outreach program and a paid internship I co-designed for Rantoul high school students in collaboration with Anne Sautman, Director of Education at the University of Illinois Krannert Art Museum, and Laura Billimack, art teacher at Rantoul Township High School.[17] ArtSpeak is a 16-week once a

week after school art program involving visits to the museum, art making and exhibition, a public performance at SPEAK Café, involving high school interns in staffing a family festival event at the museum,[18] and their creation of a website to publicize their artworks, experiences, and writings.[19] *ArtSpeak* is jointly funded by the high school and the museum, and a pilot program for future museum outreach and engagement in neighboring rural communities not traditionally served by the university.

Art, Community, and Civil Society is a service-learning[20] course I wrote based on my CDMS fellowship. This course was offered to students across the campus. Students in *Art, Community, and Civil Society* examined scholarly texts and creative practices selected from academia, the arts, popular culture, and the business world that inform varied perspectives about creativity, cultural expression, and public work. They used new digital media to create their own content (images and research texts) relating to themes emerging from these readings. Students then adapted ideas from these readings to student-team developed community projects.[21] They documented and reflected on their work, utilizing an action research approach and conducting their inquiries with interests in how globalization impacts local cultural life. Dissemination of information about their public engagement projects, utilizing digital media, was a final requirement of the course.[22]

Museums in Action: Engaging the Community. Museums-in-Action is a course that I created and taught in collaboration with Anne Sautman, Director of Education at the Krannert Art Museum, in 2007. Now offered every semester,[23] this course enrolls students from disciplines across the campus. Students read and discuss scholarly texts about museum education, museum theory, multicultural issues, and the changing roles of art museums. They conduct historical research on artworks in the museum's permanent holdings and develop educational materials that are shared with local teachers. Students conduct school tours and travel to schools and organizations to provide art enrichment activities. And they develop and implement on-site public museum events.[24] Two of the many successful outcomes from this course include *ARTZilla*, an evening event in the museum planned by college students for college students,[25] and student created Podcasts, with scripts researched and written by pairs of students for young audiences, their scripts then edited by museum staff, and their scripted discussions then practiced, perfomed, and audio recorded in the professional studios of our campus-supported public television station.

Off-Campus Teaching. Early in my university career, I had the opportunity to teach courses off campus to K-12 art teachers engaged in professional development. Teaching off campus involved driving once a week from Champaign to either the Chicago suburbs or Peoria, where we had a significant concentration of teachers wanting to take courses with the University of Illinois. Over 16 years, I created and taught a variety of courses that addressed contemporary theories and practices in education. These courses emphasized multicultural education,

interdisciplinary curriculum development, inquiry-based learning, service-learning, and applications of new technologies in education. I taught these courses under the auspices of a masters degree program offered through the College of Education at my university. In early years, art teachers were my primary audience. In more recent years, teachers in other subjects, administrators, and non-teachers were increasingly participants in my off-campus courses. Our classes were vibrant, multi-disciplinary sites for examination of contemporary theories, practices, trends, and issues in K-12 education. Most endearing to me was the fact that once a week I had the incredible experience of *being with* these teachers, sharing in their aspirations and struggles to, like me, do good work. I believed that I was facilitating and enriching the professional lives of Illinois educators and viewed this off-campus teaching as an important form of university outreach and public service to the state of Illinois. At the same time, I learned as much from these teachers as I did from my academic readings, and this time together facilitated my own professional development as much as it did theirs.

Entrepreneurial Strategies, Reflections and Speculations

The professional endeavors highlighted above interrelate in their aims, methods, and constituents. They involve multiple institutions (the university, schools, and civic organizations) and extend university resources to off-campus organizations and individuals. I believe that an entrepreneurial disposition[26] has been instrumental to facilitating these activities. In the following discussion, I develop this proposition, identifying specific entrepreneurial behaviors that have positively impacted my ventures. I also share limitations and failures.

Risk tolerance. Risk tolerance refers to the capacity to thrive within risky initiatives. My projects have been developed with questionable institutional support and implemented with individuals I did not know very well. Impediments have included mixed messages from university supervisors and coworkers about the value of "community work" both to my academic unit and to the university. This is understandable, given our context of dwindling resources, competing departmental needs for my time, and what art educator Tom Anderson (1985) identified over 25 years ago as institutional codification and resistance to change. The fact is I have never been very successful in having public-oriented or local community work counted in annual faculty performance evaluations as anything more than *service,* which at my university doesn't count for much.[27]

Personal and professional risks have included delaying completion of my research as it morphed into consulting, grants writing, event planning, and fund raising; spending valuable professional time serving off-campus teachers, community members, and organizations; offering on-campus arts-based courses to non-art majors; and offering community outreach

programming with educated guesses that intended audiences would find them beneficial. I am also concerned about risks to participants, setting up expectations that might not be met, overstepping roles, or making mistakes that might disadvantage organizations.[28]

Institutional impediments have contributed to failures which include being taken out of teaching Museums-in-Action by superiors in order to have me teach other courses, and not securing long-term institutional support for Art, Community, and Civil Society. I attribute these losses to our faculty shortage, budget limitations, and my own inability to convince the right people to support me in my desire to teach these courses. Other failures defy such simple explanations. For example, the off-campus masters' degree program in curriculum and instruction (the program through which I had taught numerous off-campus courses), once a robust and well-liked program amongst Illinois teachers, is no longer active due to shifting departmental priorities and departmental lack of interest in managing and investing in this program. And the ArtSpeak museum outreach program, although originally conceptualized as a pilot program for other local schools and now co-funded for the past 5 years, has failed to attract any additional local schools and remains a collaboration with only one school, notably, the poorest and most racially diverse school in the area.

Risk tolerance requires development of interrelated personal dispositions and skills that include belief in the value of this work, a high sense of self-efficacy, willingness to defer other goals and rewards, a capacity to withstand setbacks, and *adaptability* to varied and changing conditions.

Adaptability. Adaptability has been central to my public-oriented work. My off-campus courses evolved over time, both in content and in instructional style, as I sought feedback from teachers over what they needed and I adapted courses to these needs. These adaptations kept my off-campus courses relevant and contributed to their success.[29] I also improved my on campus courses, utilizing insights gained from spending this time with off-campus teachers. When Art, Community, and Civil Society was first offered, it was cancelled due to lack of enrollment in my home unit. I took it to another campus unit and adapted it to a different audience who subsequently indicated in course evaluations that they found this course meaningful and engaging. When it failed to win funding in a competitive bid for a campus fellowship that would have underwritten the course's public engagement projects with financial resources, Teaching Assistant, and Web showcase of student community projects, I scaled the course back and we launched the service learning projects with no financing, no TA, and no Website.

Understanding all too well my university's bias against "service" in faculty evaluations, for many years I omitted much of my service in annual faculty activity reports. In more recent years I have added service back in to my annual Faculty Activity Reports, describing my

service endeavors in sufficient detail in my desire to educate my superiors about the nature and institutional value of this kind of work. In the mid 2000s I began to redefine my community-based activities as *engaged scholarship and teaching*. I argued then and maintain to this day that these service activities were/are, in fact, a form of scholarly engagement and education. Over the remainder of the last decade I forged affiliations with like-minded individuals and campus units in other disciplines, linked my activities to similar work that appeared to be valued in peer universities, connected my work with art education colleagues at other universities, and articulated reciprocal benefits to the university when faculty members engage in this kind of professional activity. The importance of articulating *reciprocal benefits* became clear in my work as chair of a Provost-initiated Subcommittee on Public Engagement for an *ad hoc* Tenure Review Committee in 2006-2007, in which my subcommittee studied and recommended tangible metrics by which this university would evaluate faculty members' public engagement activities.[30] Adapting findings from my 2007 subcommittee's recommendations to the Provost, in 2009, I framed my community-oriented professional work within this *language of engagement and reciprocity* in my dossier for promotion to full professor.[31]

Social Networking. The outreach projects I have described have all involved collaboration as a characteristic identified as important to entrepreneurship, and *social networking*, a strategy that enhances *social capital*.[32] Social capital is a construct used in sociology, economic, political and cultural studies to describe how varying types of inter-human relationships impact individuals' and groups' power, knowledge, skills, access to resources, and ability to achieve particular aims. Social capital is increased in relationships where trust, cooperation, and mutual interests are high (Fukuyama, 1999). *Having* social capital is recognized as essential for individual empowerment (Ferragina, 2009), professional advancement (Hamblen, 1986), and civic participation (Putnam, 2000). In Art, Community, and Civil Society, I was a consultant to student teams and a resource in helping facilitate their success. As a result, I established meaningful links with local community organizations, links that facilitate both their work and mine. In my community study in Rantoul, I developed a professional relationship with the Director of Cultivadores, a Rantoul-based Latino civic organization, securing grants and positive publicity for Cultivadores. I also talked my father (a Rantoul resident) into serving on the local community development board just as the Cultivadores was being considered for a subsequently funded multi-year $100,000 federal grant underwritten by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development.

On campus I have nurtured relationships with talented like-minded individuals who have been able to contribute to or support my outreach work. I collaborated with Anne Sautman in developing and launching *ArtSpeak,* and developed and co-taught a course with her. I nominated Anne for a zero-time faculty appointment in the art education department to give

her official recognition in our department and add to our department's official faculty lineup. In my study in Rantoul, I worked with members of an organization self-named BeComeUnity, assisted them in planning and launching Rantoul's first ever Multicultural Festival, and Anne and I brought *ArtSpeak* participants to this festival to host an arts activity table. I shared our ongoing successes with the Director of the museum, the Director of the School of Art and Design (my home academic unit), the Dean of our college, the Director of the Center on Democracy in a Multiracial Society, and other campus officials, all individuals I believed should know about these initiatives. In recognition for my collaborative work with Anne Sautman, the Director of the Krannert Art Museum appointed me in 2009 as an Education Consultant to the museum, a title requiring College approval.

Leveraging. Studies of entrepreneurship mention the ability to capitalize on opportunities, to network, finesse resources, and turn challenges into assets as behaviors frequently exhibited by entrepreneurs. I view these behaviors as *leveraging,* a behavior intimately interrelated with *social capital*. I have developed opportunities by strategically asking for assistance and by maximizing minimal financial and personnel resources. And I have described the work in ways I hoped that individuals in leadership positions at my university would recognize as having value. This includes both articulating the public benefits of the work and generating positive publicity and therefore good will toward the university. I spotlighted our academic program and colleagues in positive ways in press releases, and utilized respected scholarly sources and campus documents to support my claims about the value of the work to the university. I have also acknowledged, thanked and credited individuals, departments, and campus units for their contributions and supports. Press releases and reports I generated explicitly mention these units, departments, and individuals.

Some of these public relations efforts have been helpful in terms of garnering and maintaining support for some of my outreach initiatives. ArtSpeak was highlighted by the university's Office of Public Engagement as one of 15 campus initiatives to help make the case in the university application to the Carnegie Foundation for Carnegie Community Engagement Recognition. ArtSpeak was also featured in a high quality color booklet produced by the Office of Public Engagement. In 2009, I received the annual College Teaching Excellence Award for my innovative teaching, a prestigious award that explicitly mentioned my social reconstructionist oriented professional work. I also recently received two national awards from the National Art Education Association, and one national award from the United States Society for Education Through Art. All of these awards have been in recognition of my civic engagement oriented research, innovative teaching, and community outreach endeavors.[33] Inasmuch as respected peers and leaders have positively evaluated my work, these recognitions both provide moral support to me and much needed tangible evidence to university officials of the value of this kind of work.

Synergy. Projects often take on a life of their own. When conducted within a compliment of related projects, they create their own synergy. Each of my public engagement projects has enhanced the others unpredictably and asymmetrically, and together they have taken on added meaning, energy, and value. For example, my off-campus courses informed both my on-campus teaching and my research, and in many ways my off-campus teaching has shaped my current understanding of contemporary schools. My community research project in Rantoul led me to call upon Anne Sautman (Director of Education at the Krannert Art Museum) for support and advice. This phone call resulted in ArtSpeak and Museums-in-Action. The following year, I invited the ArtSpeak students to host an art table at the BeComeUnity sponsored Rantoul Multicultural Festival, and staff members from the Krannert Art Museum's Geertz Education Center also showed up with boxes of art supplies and ideas for cool fun projects perfect for a festival.

My attention to the local Latino outreach center, also first capturing my interest through my CDMS-sponsored community study in Rantoul, resulted in a National Endowment for the Arts Grant, the first ever for this small town, and Rantoul's first public mural in over 30 years. Other murals have also appeared at Cultivadores and around town. I continue to maintain contact with artist Lindsey Scott,[34] co-writer of the National Endowment for the Arts Grant for Cultivadores and who is now engaged in community arts education in East St. Louis. I am hoping to connect Lindsey to a longstanding university initiative emanating from the University of Illinois College of Fine and Applied Arts–the East St. Louis Action Research Project.[35] A former student in the Museums-in-Action course has been developing a plan to convert an historic round barn owned by the university into a state-of-the-art agricultural history museum. He now also wants to pursue a doctorate at the university. In collaboration with a now retired colleague in the art education department at my university, Julia Kellman, I have also recently facilitated development of a new undergraduate *Community-Based Art Education Minor* in my home unit. Now in its infancy, this minor is attracting students from all over campus. These public engagement projects and programs blend, flow, and energize one another, cohering around a set of principles and goals aimed at reaching out to culturally diverse and underserved local populations.

Seeing Arts-Based Public Engagement as a Hopeful Endeavor Facilitated within a Community of Practice

The public engagement professional activities highlighted in this essay build on a view of art education as a means to foster civil society. I have merged action research findings with autoethnographic writing to develop insights about the nature and efficacy of my own public engagement oriented work. But more than that, for me this inquiry and the writing of my story have been a way of reviving my questions in pursuit of doing good work–questions that are philosophical, empirical, personal, and political all at the same time.

Largely developed through autobiography and reflection on how I have shaped and sustained this work over two decades as a university employee, I have shared selected vignettes, *short stories* so to speak, about my professional aspirations and work as someone employed in a research-focused university but who is deeply interested in public service. There is indication that my university (and other universities as well)[36] is increasingly endeavoring to facilitate this kind of work, as evidenced in a dazzling variety of university civic initiatives, programs, press releases, and official documents testifying to a mission to serve.[37] But my experiences tell me that at the university level our public service-oriented mission is poorly resourced and still riddled with mixed messages, self-contradictions, institutionalized impediments, resistance and confusion at the academic unit level, and a general lack of accountability. Finding a fracture between what organizations say and what they do is not particularly surprising (Brown & Duguid, 1991), and I do not wish for readers to conclude that I am unhappy or unsympathetic toward my university because of this fracture. Balancing aims and practices in an era of global economic recession, shrinking budgets, increasing public suspicion and pressure, and shifting state priorities is a monumental undertaking for a large state-funded educational institution. I have been honored and privileged to have had the opportunity to work in such an amazing place. My intent in telling my story is to shed light on the public service aspirations of an employee working in a research university, and to share specific strategies (behaviors) that I have utilized to advance this work…behaviors that have also been identified in writings about cultural creatives, entrepreneurship, and civil society

I have posited and explored the idea that an entrepreneurial disposition, despite its problematic association with a neoliberal ideology, may be facilitative to public engagement endeavors. Specific entrepreneurial strategies that I have utilized and described in this essay include *risk tolerance*, *adaptability*, *social networking*, *leveraging*, and *creating synergy*.[38] As I hope my snapshots and reflections have shown, these behaviors have generated limited but concrete returns in terms of advancing this kind of work. In answer to my question about the efficacy of an entrepreneurship framework (posed as a heading as at the beginning of the last section), I can only say that an entrepreneurial disposition has been necessary but insufficient as a means of sustaining my public engagement-oriented work, that the work is incomplete, beset with setbacks and lingering uncertainties.

Public engagement is itself a long-term venture, requiring clear but adaptable aims, alignment with institutional missions, systematic evaluation, social relevance, and most of all, an outlook of hope and good will. Although universities vary greatly in terms of their public engagement missions, their initiatives on behalf of local communities, and their interests in addressing local social justice issues, universities are also tremendously important institutions for advancing the public good. Insofar as faculty members are able to focus our aims and strategies, and to the degree that we are able to both align our work with institutional priorities

and convincingly articulate reciprocal benefits to our university employers, this kind of local civic work may garner necessary, albeit limited and temporary, institutional support. As individuals dedicated to the notion that art education and civil society are linked together, faculty members experienced in public engagement work may also now be in a position to provide leadership both in their respective institutions and within our communities of practice across institutional settings, as our places of employment that so choose move in this direction.

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Endnotes

1. Extrapolating from varied and contradictory definitions, I have defined *civil society* as "that realm of private voluntary associations and public agencies or institutions working toward the public good" (Delacruz, 2005, p. 4). Underlying notions of civil society cohere around interrelated political and social concerns: cultural diversity, democracy and citizen empowerment; inclusiveness, equity, and social justice; honesty, fairness, and transparency; safeguarding public health, security, and sustainability; and a critical examination of and response to the impact of globalization. Over the past two decades, I have written extensively about how art education engages these concerns (see Delacruz citations given in the references of this essay).

2. A former doctoral student in kinesiology and now a faculty member at the University of North Dakota, Jesse Rhoades, introduced to me the rich literature on *communities of practice* while enrolled in a graduate course I was teaching in the late 2000s. The course was entitled "Writing for Publication" and offered to students in the humanities across the university. In the course description, I referred to students who chose to enroll as a "community of scholarly inquiry". The purpose of the course was to create a communal place where graduate students at any stage of research on any kind of project could participate, nurture one another's research and writings-in-progress through peer review, and explore early career goals and strategies.

3. Art education scholars whose writings have significantly informed my own work include (but are not limited to) Tom Anderson, Stephen Carpenter, Christine Ballengee-Morris, Flavia Bastos, Doug Blandy, Laura Chapman, Kristin Congdon, Vesta Daniel, Rogena Degge, Kerry Freedman, Elizabeth Garber, Olivia Gude, Karen Hamblen, Karen Keifer-Boyd, Vincent Lanier, Marjorie Manifold, June McFee, Pamela Taylor, James Sanders, Debbie Smith-Shank, Mary Stokrocki, Pat Stuhr, Christine Thompson, and Enid Zimmerman. Readers may find in the reference section of this essay writings by these individuals that are also relevant to the idea of art education as a form of *engagement*.

4. Known as community-based art education, professional engagement in off-campus sites posits art education professional activity as a form of civic engagement and social activism, or in short, *public work.* After Boyte (2002), *public work* is defined here as civic work designed to serve the public good, and as work that has lasting significance. Under this definition, pre-k-12 teachers as well as university educators are engaged in public work of tremendous value.

5. Richard Florida is Professor of Business and Creativity at the Rotman School of Management, Director of the Martin Prosperity Institute at the University of Toronto, Canada, and formerly Hirst Professor of Public Policy at George Mason University and a senior scientist with the Gallup Organization.

6. Daniel Pink is writer of numerous popular books about creativity and work, consultant to corporations, associations, and universities around the world on economic transformation and the new workplace, and former chief speechwriter to Vice President Al Gore and aide to U.S. Labor Secretary Robert Reich.

7. For additional policy statements about the value of the creative sector to economic development, see Lynch (2008) and Venturelli (n. d.) listed in the references.

8. The basic premise in traditional economic theory is that in the right contexts worthwhile innovations in the marketplace find venture capitalism, and together they replace obsolete products and services, alter business models, and fuel economic growth.

9. See the global study of high expectation entrepreneurship conducted by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), a research program of the London Business School College (Autio, 2005). According to this report, 9.8% of the world's entrepreneurs are expected to create almost 75% of the job generated by new business ventures.

10. Although current global economic crisis is of grave concern, critical analysis of the global recession, is far beyond the scope of this paper, other than to acknowledge the breadth, depth and profound impact of this crisis on people and communities throughout the world.

11. Resource development involves the ability to recognize, find, finesse, adapt, and maximize existing resources, and to create new resources for specific purposes. Resources to be recognized, sought, or created include but are not limited to knowledge or information, talented, committed people, organizational ethos, infrastructure, technology, facilities, equipment, and supplies, and money.

12. In capitalist economies, social capital may be used to advance entrepreneurial initiatives and may include profit motives. In academic settings, these motives may include economic needs and incentives, status, recognition, and power or influence.

13. In economic theory, *value* is understood in terms of the financial profitability, desirability, and the virility of the innovation; of its capacity to bring about the destruction or elimination of obsolete products, services, or processes and to generate their replacement with new ones, in terms of impact on the marketplace itself.

14. In the university setting, the *stakeholders* with an interest in the professional activities of faculty members include university administrators, co-workers, students, and public beneficiaries of faculty members' projects. Investors in this work include community partners, academic departments, students, campus administrators, state legislatures, taxpayers, businesses, civic agencies, and private foundations.

15. The hometown of my youth, the population of Rantoul, Illinois dropped from 27,000 in 1988 to 9,000 in 1993 due to the closure of its military base. Then it saw a 25% population increase over the next few years to its current population of 12,000. This increase was due in part to the influx of low income and racially diverse residents who moved to the community to take advantage of the abundance of affordable housing that had been

vacated by the U.S. Department of Defense. The current poverty rate amongst Rantoul school-age children is about 68% and the annual mobility rate in this community is over 30%.

16. I created a website devoted to this project. See https://netfiles.uiuc.edu/edelacru/www/Rantoul_main.html.

17. The idea for ArtsSpeak came from a former colleague of mine and former Director of Education at the Krannert Art Museum, Linda Duke, who implemented a similar internship program in the 1990s with Urbana High School. Needing a catchy title to attract high schoolers, Anne Sautman and I came up with the name ArtSpeak, a title adapted from another ongoing event known as SPEAK (Song, Poetry, Expression, Art, and Knowledge) Café and held in the Krannert Art Museum coffee shop. SPEAK Café is a once a month, open-mic hip-hop oriented performance event seeking culturally diverse college students as an audience. Interestingly, SPEAK café has increasingly attracted local high schoolers.

18. High school interns help staff the Krannert Art Museum Kids@Krannert Family Festival, a twice a year two-hour on-site family event developed for families and young children.

19. See local news articles about this program, including "Trips to Krannert museum deepen students' art appreciation" at http://www.news-gazette.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/art/2008-05-22/trips-krannert-museum-deepen-students-art-appreciation.ht, "ArtSpeak has had impact on student" at http://api.ning.com/files/eqWx5gceWmy7rMiwr1A8R1LsyAILV3QoVEnXNOJrkn28-CC0qM*nJk7lTfRUtRUqZlGTB5HXr2FlDmRaPG1q1sIwj4nromPi/KrannertArtMuseum sArtSpeakhasImpactonStudent.pdf, and Rantoul Teens Speak Up at Krannert Art Museum at http://www.40north.org/news/?p=1154.See also the 2010 website created by ArtSpeak students at http://www.rths.k12.il.us/artspeak/index.html.

20. Service-learning is an approach that engages students in educational activities that merge problem solving and project work in real-world settings. For more information about service-learning in art education, see the writings of Christine Ballengee-Morris, Melanie Buffington, Carole Jeffers, B. S. Carpenter, and Pamela Taylor cited in the references.

21. Public engagement projects chosen by Art, Community and Civil Society students included: (a) conducing a needs assessment of a local not-for-profit arts organization, Community Center for the Arts, and creation of public relations materials for this organization, (web pages, PowerPoint slide presentations, and a video documentary); (b) creating an archive of high quality photographs (interior and exterior) of historic downtown buildings in downtown Urbana, Illinois for the Champaign Country Historic

Archives, conducting interviews with business and building owners, and creating a brochure about selected historic buildings; (c) design and delivery of a PowerPoint presentation of selected artworks in the Krannert Art Museum, with an accompanying art lesson for a local school, and (d) creation of educational packets, conducting a needs assessment, and designing web materials for a local free health clinic serving individuals living in poverty.

22. Students shared their work through YouTube videos, blogs, and through the university online newspaper.

23. Although I team-taught this course for four semesters, I have been subsequently assigned to teach other courses due to departmental budgetary and staffing needs. Anne Sautman continues to teach the course, and I frequently send her students newly admitted to the art education department. Museums-in-Action is also listed as an elective course in the new undergraduate Community-Based Art Education Minor that I helped develop at the University of Illinois.

24. College students enrolled in this course design and deliver short, fun art lessons based on the art on exhibit in the Krannert Art Museum at the twice a semester Kids@Krannert Family Festival.

25. *ArtZilla* has brought in 300-700 diverse students to the museum once a semester for an evening of art, music, culture, food, and fun. Students in Museums-in-Action planned and staffed the activities, helped create and disseminate publicity, conducted audience studies during the event, and wrote a summative reflection/evaluation of the event. Audience studies indicated that attendees included many individuals who had not previously come to the museum.

26. I find *entrepreneurship* to be a problematic construct insofar as it is steeped in a capitalist framework fraught with debatable constructs and issues due to its alignment with neoliberal ideologies of a free market economy, wealth accumulation, laissez faire governance, rugged individualism, and social Darwinism. Setting these issues aside, however, I believe that university faculty members' professional work may benefit from an entrepreneurial disposition. I would also point out that *social entrepreneurship*, although still operating within this capitalist framework, realigns innovation with a social justice/social change agenda (see Dees, 2001 cited in the references). For an essay on university faculty "intellectual entrepreneurship" see Bresler, 2009, cited in the references.

27. The problem of having "service" count in faculty performance evaluations is a longstanding issue in many universities. This problem is compounded by the observation that art educators, discipline of art education, and the kind of work we do are also not highly valued in university settings. In two provocative analyses of the status of art education, written a quarter of a century ago, art educator Karen Hamblen explains this problem more fully but also observes that although the work of art educators is not highly valued in Western society, art educators nevertheless devote themselves to this work predicated on the notion that they provide knowledge and skills essential to the betterment of society (1985, 1986). Indeed, in my own professional life experience, I have come to accept that although I may be expendable as a worker in my place of employment, I can still make a positive impact on the lives of others through my civic work as an art educator.

28. I do not intend to imply that my privileged university lifestyle involves risks of the same magnitude as many of the participants involved in my public outreach activities. The point here is to identify professional risks and career considerations that faculty members in academic settings should take into account when venturing into work that involves uncertain support and minimal institutional incentives.

29. I measured the success of these off-campus courses in terms of the intensity of these teachers' engagement in course content as evidenced in class discussions, the high quality of research and curricular work produced by these teachers, these teachers' utilization of ideas developed in my courses in their classroom practice, continued enrollments, work of mouth positive reviews, and both anonymous course evaluations and direct positive feedback from these teachers.

30. Benefits that I have subsequently articulated to the university include adding new knowledge about the interface of art, culture, education, and community development; developing specific local points of access for future social science, educational, and community research with ethnically and culturally diverse populations; and positive local publicity about the success of these endeavors. Articulating reciprocal benefits to the university and providing tangible means for recognizing and evaluating such work has been only minimally successful in having my work supported, leading me to conclude that I have not yet articulated the *right kinds of reciprocal benefits* to the university.

31. Although this *language of engagement* has greatly benefited me in clarifying my values and refining my philosophical framework for my work, I was promoted to a full professorship primarily because I now had the right number of publications in the right places.

32. I have come to a greater appreciation of the notion of *social capital* after two graduate students enrolled in "Writing for Publication", Jennifer Bergmark and Sara Mackus, made this construct central in their studies of community-based art education initiatives serving low income and minority populations.

33. These awards include the 2009 National Art Education Association (NAEA) Higher Education Art Educator of the Year Award and the 2009 NAEA Women's Caucus June King McFee Award.

34. Lindsey Scott is an award-winning artist, a bronze tablet graduate of the University of Illinois School of Art and Design, and the daughter of my family's lawyer. She was working at the Cultivadores when I began my community study in Rantoul. Readers may see Lindsey's work at http://www.seehere.info/.

35. The East St. Louis Action Research Project is a University of Illinois College of Fine and Applied Arts initiated cooperatively managed resident-driven service learning community development program that has served to revitalize the distressed urban areas of East St. Louis, Illinois for the past fifteen years. See http://eslarp.illinois.edu/.

36. For information about national and cross-university initiatives in support of university-community public engagement see Imaging America, Campus Compact, and Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, cited in the references.

37. Such initiatives are in keeping with the public mission of my home university and numerous other U.S. public universities created through the Morrell College Land-Grant Act signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln in 1862 (see http://www.csrees.usda.gov/about/offices/legis/morrill.html).

38. I did not include specific discussion of *time management*, *determination*, and *focus* in this essay, although these are also critical skills required in successful entrepreneurial work.

About the Author

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