TABLE OF CONTENTS

3 | From the Editor

4 | A New Era for Diversity & Democracy at AAC&U
   CAROL GEARY SCHNEIDER, Association of American Colleges and Universities

Transformative Partnerships at Home and Abroad

6 | Connective Corridors and Generative Partnerships: A New Paradigm
   CARYN MCTIGHE MUSIL, Association of American Colleges and Universities

8 | Reimagining Tulane as an Engaged Community Partner
   SCOTT S. COWEN, Tulane University

11 | Minding the Gap: Partnering Across Sectors for Democracy
   BERNIE RONAN, Maricopa Community Colleges
   GEORGE L. MEHAFFY, American Association of State Colleges and Universities

14 | Cooperating Across the Atlantic: Helping Realize Higher Education’s Democratic Mission
   SJUR BERGAN, Council of Europe
   IRA HARKAVY, International Consortium for Higher Education, Civic Responsibility, and Democracy and University of Pennsylvania

17 | Developing Sustainable Partnerships for International Community-Based Research
   MARY ANN STUDER, Defiance College

Practice and Perspective

20 | Democratizing Teaching and Learning through Real Dialogue across Differences
   CARMEN WERDER, Western Washington University

22 | Finding Value in My Voice
   DANIEL ESPINOZA-GONZALEZ, Western Washington University

23 | Partnerships for Learning and Community at Pālolo Valley Homes
   JUDITH KIRKPATRICK, Kapi'olani Community College
   ULLA HASAGER, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

25 | Learning Collaboration from and for My Community
   STEPHEN MAYBIR, Pālolo Tenants Association and Kapi‘olani Community College

26 | Strengthening Immigrant Voices through Museum–Community College Partnerships
   MARGOT EDLIN, Queensborough Community College and CALTA21
   PATRICIA LANNES, CALTA21
   KITTY BATEMAN, Queensborough Community College and CALTA21

28 | Engaged Pedagogy and Neighborhood Change in South Memphis
   KATHERINE LAMBERT-PENNINGTON, University of Memphis

For More…

30 | In Print

31 | Resources

31 | Opportunities

About Diversity & Democracy

Diversity & Democracy supports higher education faculty and leaders as they design and implement programs that advance civic learning and democratic engagement, global learning, and engagement with diversity to prepare students for socially responsible action in today’s interdependent but unequal world. The publication features evidence, research, and exemplary practices to assist practitioners in creating learning opportunities that realize this vision.

Cover photo by Kalman Zabarsky for Boston University Photography. "Explosion" sculpture by Sergio Castillo.
FROM THE EDITOR

Transformative Partnerships at Home and Abroad

In front of Boston University’s Metcalf Center for Science and Engineering stands a sculpture by Sergio Castillo titled “Explosion.” According to the Boston Art Commission, the sculpture represents a proton collision: the cascading array of particles produced in a burst of energy when two protons collide. But the sculpture is also a physical manifestation of another, less ephemeral kind of transformative combination: that of iron, chromium, and other elements that constitute stainless steel, a ubiquitous alloy in the modern world.

Steel is a critical example of the principle that individual elements can be more effective when combined. In steel, elemental metals, melted and melded in a crucible or modern converter, maintain their chemical identities but reconstitute their crystal formations to create a material with ideal physical properties for an array of uses. With its tensile strength and ductility, it’s no surprise that steel has been central to much of the modern world’s mechanical infrastructure: the buildings, byways, and even artworks that connect humankind.

Energy, strength, and flexibility, directed toward the purpose of building a civic infrastructure for society: like steel from a crucible, these are among the skills and capacities we might wish to emerge from our modern crucible moment. As the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement argued in its recent report, A Crucible Moment: College Learning for Democracy’s Future (2012), the current moment of civic malaise and disinvestment is precisely the time for colleges and universities to reclaim their role in ensuring America’s democratic health. A Crucible Moment urges higher education institutions to:

1. Foster a civic ethos across all parts of campus educational culture
2. Make civic literacy a core expectation for all students
3. Practice civic inquiry across all fields of study
4. Advance civic action through transformative partnerships, at home and abroad. (31)

This issue of Diversity & Democracy collects a range of examples of creative leadership and action related to this fourth imperative. Drawing from an array of sites—community colleges, state colleges, liberal arts schools, and research universities; public and private institutions anchored in a range of geographic locations; associations and collaboratives reaching across geopolitical and organizational boundaries—the issue provides snapshots of the kinds of partnerships currently being formed in the name of strengthening higher education’s role in building a more civically engaged, democratic future.

Each of these partnerships aspires in some way toward transformation. At Tulane University, that transformation takes the form of a newly engaged university and a revived community. In The Democracy Commitment and the American Democracy Project, it appears in civic practices strengthened through collaboration between community colleges and state colleges and universities. Across international boundaries, it glimmers in the conversations of intellectual leaders from the Council of Europe and the International Consortium for Higher Education, Civic Responsibility, and Democracy and in the research practices of students from Defiance College. It is evident in democratic discussions of teaching and learning practiced at Western Washington University; in the service-learning partnerships of Honolulu’s Pālolo Valley Homes; in New York City’s museum–community college partnerships; and in engaged pedagogies practiced in South Memphis.

Each of these partnerships, whatever its scale or framework, illustrates the principle that individual entities are stronger and more effective when they work together. Moreover, no individual or group emerges from the partnership unchanged. Students become more skilled in practicing the skills and dispositions that allow them to actively engage in their communities. Universities become more effective hubs for research and education. And communities and their constituents gain engagement with higher education and concomitant access to its many resources.

This is what I see when I look at the steel beams of Sergio Castillo’s sculpture: the potential for individual entities to combine their strengths and energies and emerge collectively transformed, symbolically and substantively. I hope that this issue of Diversity & Democracy evokes similar responses in readers aspiring to similar ends.

—KATHRYN PELTIER CAMPBELL, editor of Diversity & Democracy

REFERENCES


A New Era for Diversity & Democracy at AAC&U

CAROL GEARY SCHNEIDER, president of the Association of American Colleges and Universities

The publication before you signals the start of yet another new era in AAC&U’s ongoing commitment to exploring enduring questions about diversity, democracy, and liberal learning in global and local contexts. AAC&U is expanding the frequency and length of this important periodical, rededicating Diversity & Democracy as shared space for the many partner organizations, scholars, educational leaders, and faculty who are working with us to make civic learning a pervasive achievement for all college students and an expected component of a high-quality twenty-first-century college education. Simultaneously, we are doubling down on our long-term engagement with diversity as an essential element of college learning and, importantly, as a vital catalyst for learning outcomes that are indispensable for work and citizenship—including critical inquiry, communication, problem solving, and social responsibility (O’Neill 2012). As has become increasingly clear in both the economic and civic realms, twenty-first-century challenges require the capacity to work collectively across differences—applying ethical reasoning and integrative knowledge to solve unscripted problems. As AAC&U documented in a recent synthesis of national research (Finley 2012), some students currently graduate with these capabilities, but many do not. Developing the capacities needed to solve problems across difference can no longer be seen as mainly an option for the privileged few. By expanding this periodical, AAC&U is widening the arena where colleges and universities can share their progress in creating educational environments where every student learns how to engage difference productively while working with others to solve difficult problems—including the problem of deep and debilitating inequities, in the United States and around the globe.

Diversity, Democracy, and AAC&U

This expanded reach for Diversity & Democracy builds on a twenty-year legacy. In 1993, AAC&U spearheaded a decade-long national initiative, American Commitments: Diversity, Democracy, and Liberal Education, designed to deepen higher education’s work at the intersections of diversity and democracy. American Commitments engaged hundreds of institutions in curricular, cocurricular, and cultural reforms based in an understanding that diversity is a key resource for educational excellence and a critical if often undervalued element of civic culture in the United States. In the midst of that initiative, AAC&U launched the periodical Diversity Digest in 1996 as a resource for campus practitioners engaged in this work.

A decade later, higher education’s engagement with diversity had evolved and expanded. Accomplished scholars and educators had developed a rich array of resources to assist practitioners in addressing inequities and advancing knowledge across differences, and the diversity movement began to intersect in provocative and promising ways with two other movements focused on higher education’s social responsibilities: the growing civic and global learning movements. To assist these three movements in strengthening mutually beneficial connections while moving their collective work from the margins to the center, we reimagined Diversity Digest and relaunched it as Diversity & Democracy in 2007.

In the years since, higher education has deepened its commitments to diversity and democracy on multiple fronts, local and global. But the context for this work continues to evolve, with progress and setbacks intertwined. Just as the United States reached a significant milestone in electing its first African American president, his presidency inherited the country’s deepest economic crisis since the Great Depression. Just as the nation reaches new levels of racial and ethnic diversity, new legal challenges to considering these factors in college admissions have reached the Supreme Court. Just as educational leaders are recognizing that global challenges demand new levels of creative collaboration, deepening global inequity and domestic political polarization threaten to exacerbate divisions of nation, class, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual identity, ability, gender, and immigration status. With the expanded Diversity & Democracy, we begin a new year with a renewed focus on higher education’s role in discerning through these challenges a collective path forward.

The Next Generation of Work

Six years ago, AAC&U launched its Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) campaign with the report College Learning for the New Global Century, underscoring the global contexts for the college learning American students need. We have since come to see the global century as rooted in the global commons—the real and imagined spaces where we confront the shared challenges that define our responsibilities to and for each other. These challenges—which encompass every big question we face as human beings, from economic health to environmental sustainability—affect each of
Diversity fully embraced is the ultimate test for a democratic community. Diversity describes our fellow citizens; democratic values inscribe the obligations we affirm—and enact—with one another.

leaders are acknowledging anew that colleges and universities have for too long neglected their role in preparing students for civic and economic life, despite American higher education’s roots in building a foundation for engaged citizenship.

With its 2012 report A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy’s Future, the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement called for heightened attention to higher education’s role in sustaining the country’s civic vitality in the context of global interdependence. The next generation of work for diversity and democracy will build in part on the momentum from that report, mobilizing groups like the Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Action Network, described by Caryn McTighe Musil in this issue of Diversity & Democracy.

In returning to these civic commitments, higher education will strengthen its engagement with the very issues that American Commitments raised twenty years ago when it laid the groundwork for the original Diversity Digest. As I stated in my preface to the second edition of the American Commitments publication The Drama of Diversity and Democracy, “We assume the future of our democracy, of course. But we are not asking the nation’s most highly educated citizens to think about what it will actually take to sustain it. And the core issues for a democratic republic—questions about the meaning of freedom, equality, human dignity, human rights, civil rights, justice and
test for a democratic community. Diversity describes our fellow citizens; democratic values inscribe the obligations we affirm—and enact—with one another. This is true whether we enter the conversation with a focus on America’s increasing demographic diversity, the civic commitments of its citizens, or the global contexts in which we all live our lives. It is more imperative than ever that we be able to answer the question “Making Progress?” with an emphatic “yes”—particularly when that progress relates to students’ capacities to engage proactively with their diverse and stratified world.

In the new era of this work, Diversity & Democracy aims to move the conversations about these critical topics forward, building momentum for interconnected priorities with renewed vigor and focus. We hope that this expanded publication will assist faculty, staff, and administrators in addressing the challenge that a diverse democracy in a global commons puts to each of us: that of upholding our shared responsibilities to one another.

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Connective Corridors and Generative Partnerships: A New Paradigm

CARYN MCTIGHE MUSIL, senior scholar and director of civic learning and democracy initiatives, Association of American Colleges and Universities

Under the dynamic leadership of Chancellor Nancy Cantor, Syracuse University has earned praise for its exemplary commitment to reimagining how twenty-first-century academic institutions can forward the public good and advance democracy’s deepest principles of equality and opportunity. One of the university’s projects, the Connective Corridor, links University Hill with downtown Syracuse through a public works initiative focused on art, technology, and sustainable design. The working group of community-based organizations, neighborhood leaders, and businesses that oversee the project is collaborating with the university to revitalize the city and spur economic development.

The Connective Corridor upends academic institutions’ standard approach to their communities, which has too long been more divisive than connective. Academic institutions have often acted as though they were islands apart, independent of and unaffected by events in their local, national, or global communities. When institutions did engage locally, they were too often motivated by a desire to expand their campus boundaries or fortify their economic enclaves, even if it meant dispersing businesses and residents to distant locations. More recently, institutions may have engaged in community outreach that, while altruistically motivated, required almost no changes in internal academic practices.

Syracuse University posits an alternative model that marks a dramatic but slowly evolving shift in campus–community partnerships and makes more transparent the interdependency of modern life. Instead of erecting fences, railroad tracks, and highways that dissect rather than connect communities, this new model opens corridors of communication, intercourse, and economic development, seeking to advance economic and public purposes in concert with others. It also expands the purposes and methods of scholarship, inspiring what Syracuse University calls Scholarship in Action. A paradigm shift that drives everything else, the new model defines academic institutions not as reaching out to the community, but as being part of the community.

A National Call to Action

Syracuse University’s engagement in more democratic, reciprocal campus–community partnerships reflects the focus of one of the recommendations of A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy’s Future (2012). The report calls for readers to “expand the number of robust, generative civic partnerships and alliances, locally, nationally, and globally to address common problems, empower people to act, strengthen communities and nations, and generate new frontiers of knowledge” (vi). The recommendation intimates that advancing knowledge must be interconnected with advancing social and economic capital. It suggests that addressing common problems means defining new frontiers of knowledge. Finally, it insists that civic agency is an integral part of applying and inventing new knowledge.

As A Crucible Moment asserts, these new participatory, inclusive alliances enact democracy’s highest aspirations at its most challenging nexus. In these alliances, the “multiplicity of voices and perspectives becomes the norm” and “defining common purposes, needs, and processes is understood as a shared and contested goal” as partners “address[] large, systemic, public problems” in fresh, coordinated, strategic ways (64–65).

First Responders

In The Road Half Traveled: University Engagement at a Crossroads (2012), Rita Axelroth Hodges and Steve Dubb examine pathbreaking practices embodied by colleges and universities that call themselves anchor institutions. The Anchor Institution Task Force (managed by Marga Incorporated and led by the University of Pennsylvania’s Netter Center for Community Partnerships) brings together almost two hundred individuals who share an interest in the anchor institution mission. Hodges and Dubb define this mission as “the conscious and strategic application of long-term, place-based economic power of the institution, in combination with its human and intellectual resources, to better the welfare of the community in which it resides” (166).

These kinds of initiatives have the potential not only to transform communities, but also to transform the academy and what it defines as scholarship. As described by Hodges and Dubb, anchor institutions function as facilitators, leaders, or conveners who build generative partnerships to address urgent needs in concert with other influential community anchors—medical institutions, businesses, nonprofits, local and state entities, community-based organizations, and philanthropists. These partnerships typically focus on issues like economic development, deteriorating schools, inadequate housing, public health, safety, employment, environmental
sustainability, and capacity building, and they drive the kind of changes that *A Crucible Moment* recommends.

**National Coordination and Collaboration**

To implement recommendations from *A Crucible Moment*—including establishing a strategic national campaign to promote civic learning and democratic engagement—AAC&U has formed a network of leaders from the national higher education organizations that helped shape the report. The Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Action Network is composed of twelve partners in addition to AAC&U: the Anchor Institution Task Force, the Association of American State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), the Bonner Foundation, Bringing Theory to Practice, Campus Compact, CIRCLE, The Democracy Commitment, Imagining America, Interfaith Youth Core, the Kettering Foundation, NASPA–Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, and the New England Research Center for Higher Education. These partners are conducting quarterly conference calls to map a coordinated strategy of outreach to the more than three thousand institutions they collectively serve. They are also forming smaller clusters of joint partnerships to advance and promote engagement with the report’s recommendations.

Several of these entities have taken notable leadership in advancing generative partnerships. AASCU, for example, has helped its members define their mission as “stewards of place” and has partnered with The Democracy Foundation’s High-Impact Initiative and university partners and thirty-five state-based coordinating offices, Campus Compact actively advocates for service learning as a connective corridor that can foster deeper and more reciprocal partnerships.

**Distinctive Marks of Generative Partnerships**

The shift toward creating truly transformative partnerships has begun in earnest and holds great promise. Institutions and communities are developing a new paradigm for generative partnerships, distinguished from earlier efforts by several elements.

**Reimagined Community Boundaries:** Partnerships and their projects are not done to but designed with a multifaceted group of stakeholders whose norms, resources, perspectives, and histories greet, meet, and collide in the crucible of community that binds one person’s welfare to another’s.

**Processes:** Partners are striving to employ democratic processes that foster voice, recognition, respect, equity, listening, participation, intercultural skills, deliberation, negotiation, patience, and trust—none of which is easy to achieve or sustain, but all of which are necessary for truly generative partnerships.

**Institutions as Citizens:** Institutions are modeling what *A Crucible Moment* calls a “civic ethos” even in their corporate practices, hiring local community members, procuring goods from local businesses and companies that promote fair labor, assisting employees in obtaining affordable housing, and investing financial resources in joint ventures to address urgent problems locally or globally.

**Citizen Students and Public Scholarship:** Institutions are measuring student learning by civic time, not seat time, as classroom boundaries expand to encompass public space where knowledge is integrated with hands-on problem solving. In this context, the norms for scholarship include research grounded in and often codeveloped with partners in new entrepreneurial civic enterprises.

When it comes to rethinking institutional engagement with society’s civic and democratic imperatives, higher education is only at the edges of imagining and implementing what might be possible. But the first images on the horizon point to higher education’s critical role in sparking civic prosperity. As Syracuse University has shown, constructing connective corridors is the first step. The Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Action Network will help orchestrate, nurture, highlight, analyze, and report the field’s cumulative progress in taking the many other steps that must follow.

**REFERENCES**


When Hurricane Isaac recently battered its way through New Orleans on the seventh anniversary of Katrina, I was vividly reminded of an event that offered the greatest challenge and most significant opportunity in Tulane University’s history. Seven years ago, 70 percent of Tulane’s main campus and 100 percent of its downtown health sciences campus were flooded due to the failure of federally built levees. With approximately 13,000 students and 8,000 employees dispersed across the country, Tulane became the first major American research university in the last century to close its doors for an entire semester. Ultimately, Hurricane Katrina resulted in damages and losses to Tulane in excess of $650 million, and it almost destroyed the university.

What followed was a strenuous, necessary, and, most of all, instructive process of rebuilding and re-envisioning the university. We had to ask—and answer—some tough fundamental questions that would define post-Katrina Tulane. What is our institutional identity? What deeply matters to us? How can we rebuild and redefine Tulane for the twenty-first century while supporting the city’s recovery? Our answers would help us move past a devastating time while strengthening our mission and reinforcing our high academic standards.

**Committing to Public Service**

After Katrina, we knew we had to become a different university. With 80 percent of the city flooded and most of its businesses closed, Tulane students, faculty, and staff would have to take a leading role in rebuilding the city. I remember telling a large gathering of students and parents who had returned to campus to retrieve their belongings and survey the damage Katrina had inflicted: “If it is not in your DNA to rebuild Tulane and New Orleans, don’t come back.”

Shortly thereafter, we inaugurated the Center for Public Service and fully integrated community engagement into Tulane’s core curriculum. We became the first major research university in the United States to make public service integral to the collegiate experience. In doing so, we aimed to develop the next generation of engaged citizens and leaders.

Tulane students fulfill their public service commitment by completing service-learning courses in their first two years and by participating in a program approved by the Center for Public Service during their junior or senior year. To fulfill the latter requirement, our students choose between a variety of service-learning courses, an academic service-learning internship, a faculty-sponsored public service research project, a public service honors thesis project, a public service-based international study abroad program, or a capstone experience with a public service component. This integration of service and scholarship creates powerful experiences for the Tulane community and substantive impacts for our community partners.

**Ensuring that Tulane Empowers**

Just as public service is often the first step to true democratic engagement, Tulane’s public service requirement was only the beginning of a dynamic effort to expand our civic mission. *Tulane Empowers* is the phrase we use to describe everything we do to address society’s most pressing problems and the profound cultural change at Tulane that we have witnessed as a result. It is our way of describing our mission to build stronger and healthier communities and develop the next generation of engaged citizens and leaders.

I strongly believe that it is one of our primary responsibilities as an institution of higher education to empower students through civic learning and democratic engagement, and to bring knowledge learned in the classroom to the community. At Tulane, we want students to draw on their civic knowledge, democratic values, and twenty-first-century skills to make a difference in their community and in society at large. *Tulane Empowers* encapsulates our goal of helping students—as well as staff and faculty—develop a passion for doing good and empowering others to do the same.

**Developing Meaningful Partnerships**

At least since the Morrill Act was passed 150 years ago, US colleges and
universities have been guided by the duty to advance social and economic development in the communities in which we reside. Colleges and universities are expected to be defining sites for learning and practicing democratic and civic responsibilities. To that end, Tulane’s Center for Public Service partners students and faculty with community organizations in reciprocal, mutually beneficial relationships that test students’ democratic values and capabilities against real-world challenges.

As an anchor institution, we recognize our responsibility for identifying ways to positively impact the community in which we exist.

At Tulane, supporting our community’s infrastructure in a deep, human way has become a critical component of our institutional life and a prerequisite for academic success. Our current and prospective students understand and value this concept. In our experience, students’ academic achievement as well as their retention and completion rates have benefited from this emphasis on public service. Both data and anecdotal measures suggest that our students are more academically accomplished, engaged, and committed than before Katrina. For example, the mean SAT score for Tulane entering freshmen increased notably in 2008 and has remained in the 1330–1340 range for the past four years. After holding constant for many years, the first-to-second-year retention rate has increased a full 5 percentage points since Katrina and now exceeds 90 percent.

In another effort to cut across traditional academic boundaries and reimagine our role in the community, we created an Institute for Public Education Initiatives to support the transformation of New Orleans’ K–12 public education system. The institute is an action-oriented think tank that informs and advances solutions to the challenges impeding K–12 success in New Orleans and beyond. Through applied research, public policy and advocacy, college readiness programs, university-based initiatives, and community partnerships, the institute meaningfully contributes to our evolving public education landscape. It also serves as a clearinghouse for charter and traditional public schools in Orleans Parish to directly access the myriad of experts and resources available at Tulane. Sparked by my work on the White House Council for Community Solutions and conversations with youth and stakeholders in New Orleans, the institute recently expanded its strategic vision to launch a new initiative that actively addresses the pressing issue of disconnected youth.

**Supporting Social Innovation and Engaged Learning**

In 2009, as a result of our growing community involvement and civically engaged student body, Tulane began developing university-wide, interdisciplinary initiatives in social innovation to better understand and create new models for social change. Though still an evolving field, social innovation has expanded rapidly as professors and students realize its relevance across disciplines. Over the past three years, our social innovation and entrepreneurship programs have grown from different pockets of creative, solution-oriented activities across campus into a powerful intertwined strategy that includes a wide range of academic and research opportunities, student-led activities, and community partnerships. This fall, we introduced an interdisciplinary Social Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship undergraduate minor, which has strengthened civic engagement’s role in learning, teaching, and research at Tulane.

To further facilitate students’ transformation into creative, inquisitive, ethical, and responsible scholars and citizens, we launched the Center for Engaged Learning and Teaching (CELT) in the spring of 2011. By providing theoretical and applied resources related to four core elements (Classroom Engagement, Research Engagement, Experiential Engagement, and Social Innovation Engagement), the center aims to help students realize their intellectual, social, and ethical potential to actively shape the world in which they live. CELT has been a driving force behind a cultural shift in the way faculty and students interact inside the classroom.

**Dismantling the Ivory Tower**

Today, Tulane has successfully reinvented its mission and strategy to better
serve our students and respond to the demands of our local and global communities. In embracing community engagement and social innovation and integrating these powerful ideas into curricular and extracurricular activities, we have dismantled the image of the remote ivory tower and replaced it with that of an engaged and dynamic community of learners and doers. Our faculty members are connecting the dots between their scholarship and research and the needs of the community, while our students are applying their studies to the real world and learning to solve problems innovatively and compassionately.

Tulane’s efforts to foster a civic ethos on campus were lauded in A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy’s Future (2012), the report and call to action developed under AAC&U’s leadership by the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement. As the report outlined, civic learning and democratic engagement may be higher education’s twenty-first-century imperative. Our attempt to meet this imperative through Tulane Empowers has not only strengthened our institution and our community, but has taught us that education, research, and community engagement are central to our institutional identity.

Our journey has confirmed what we sensed in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina seven years ago. Engaged learning and solution-oriented civic participation need to be ingrained in principles and expectations across campus. It is our duty to prepare our students for life in a culturally diverse and globally interconnected world that will challenge them as professionals and citizens. By empowering our students to link their studies with the real world and mobilizing our resources to directly combat community problems, we are reinvigorating and expanding our academic mission and effecting positive change where it is needed. I see students take leadership in demonstrating this in varying, remarkable ways every day.

Making Engagement the Rule

One morning a few weeks ago, two seniors came to my office to propose an idea. They had started a clothing line in their sophomore year and wanted to use their expertise to help a Tulane student–athlete who had just been seriously injured in a tragic football accident. Brad and Jesse didn’t know the football player personally, but the first question that came to their minds when they heard about their fellow student’s injury was “What can we do?” They wanted to create and sell t-shirts and wristbands bearing the player’s name and jersey number to raise funds for his recovery. Within just a few weeks, the students sold more than 1,600 t-shirts, generating nearly $15,000. All net proceeds were donated to a fund established to assist the student–athlete’s family with medical bills and related costs. This is just one of many inspiring examples that highlight what Tulane Empowers is all about. The way these two seniors responded to a difficult situation has become the rule rather than the exception on our campus.

For us, Katrina was a catalytic experience that marked the beginning of our transition to a more deeply engaged university. While the unprecedented challenges Tulane faced in fall 2005 necessitated transformative action, our recovery led us to turn necessity into opportunity. I would be the last one to say that we have figured it all out, but I am proud of the progress we have made in empowering our students to contribute to a robust and vibrant democratic society in the twenty-first century. Taking our civic mission seriously needs to be a priority in times of both crisis and prosperity.

Tulane’s Classroom–Community Partnerships

Tulane’s Center for Public Service partners students and faculty with community organizations in reciprocal, mutually beneficial relationships that test their democratic values and capabilities against real-world challenges. Example partnerships include

- **Economics 3330: Environmental & Natural Resources.** Working with Greenlight New Orleans to install compact fluorescent light bulbs in a New Orleans neighborhood, students study and quantify environmental organizations’ economic impact.

- **English 3650: Aristotle in New Orleans.** This classical rhetoric course challenges students to think about ancient conceptions of virtue and rhetoric while also coaching four New Orleans middle school debate teams that form the foundation of a new citywide league.

- **Education 2000: Education in a Diverse Society.** This introductory teaching certification course examines the history of American education as well as contemporary education issues. Students are provided with opportunities to serve in New Orleans public schools as classroom assistants, reading buddies, or tutors.

- **Biomedical Engineering 4040: Team Design Project II.** After learning about the design process and improving their project management and technical skills, biomedical engineering students meet with clients with disabilities and construct devices tailored to their needs.
With the 2012 London Olympics on full display this summer, we were reminded of a characteristically British phrase. While traveling by tube or rail in the United Kingdom, one often sees signs reminding riders to “mind the gap,” or note the space between the rail car and the platform. As we reflect on the beginnings of our two civic engagement projects—the American Democracy Project (ADP) in 2003 and The Democracy Commitment (TDC) in 2011—and our resulting partnership connecting the four- and two-year sectors of higher education, we are struck by this phrase’s relevance to our work. Both ADP and TDC were born out of “gaps” that higher education practitioners need to mind: between our aspirations and our practices, between the democracy we have and the democracy we seek. Since the United States’ founding as a democratic republic, the mission of American higher education has included educating students for citizenship, for active engagement in their communities. The gap between the ideals expressed in this mission and the lived realities of our institutions and communities has both alarmed us and challenged us in designing our projects to close these gaps.

Origins and Aims
The American Democracy Project (ADP) began in 2003 during a difficult period for the United States. Following the terrorist attacks of 2001, a tremendous sense of common resolve unified the American people. But after wars began in Iraq and Afghanistan, that sense of unity gave way to increasingly bitter partisan divides. With deep gaps evident between the rhetoric and realities of our democracy and an enormous sense that the country was moving in the wrong direction, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) partnered with The New York Times to launch ADP, an initiative focused specifically on the 415 public colleges and universities that are AASCU members. While provosts have always been key participants, we decided that colleges would join TDC through their president or chancellor, who would commit to providing every student with an education in democracy by appointing a campus coordinator, offering staff development, implementing civic programs, and collaborating with national partners and other colleges in the national network. Each college would also agree to complete a “civic inventory” and to participate in an annual meeting held in partnership with ADP. Thus ADP and TDC grew out of a shared context of frustration and despair as well as a shared commitment to education and action. We forged a partnership from this shared context and commitment so that we could learn from one another and build richer, more creative, and—most importantly—more intentional programs together. Too often, marvelous civic engagement projects are disconnected from the core purposes of the institution and operate in isolation, limiting their impact and their capacity to reach significant scale. By focusing on institutional intentionality, we aim over time to move beyond the model of multiple but unrelated individual programs. We thereby hope to ensure that every student at an ADP or TDC institution has an education for democracy and is equipped with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for informed, engaged citizenship.
AASCU in 2002. The phrase captures the fact that our state colleges and community colleges are committed to and responsible for the communities in which they are based, from which their students come and to which they return each day. We aim to revitalize democracy in our communities. To this end, our projects have conceived of civic work broadly. ADP and TDC support volunteerism and service learning, to be sure, but we are also committed to the full range of civic work—including democratic practice, with all its political (and therefore controversial) elements. Democracy, after all, is about conflict and compromise, and our students need opportunities to hone these skills. We are likewise concerned about diversity, both the diversity of institutional types and programs and, more importantly, the racial, ethnic, class, and gender diversity that characterizes our students. We seek to engage the issues of social justice and equity that are embodied in our students’ lives. Finally, we are mutually committed to grounded work, not just theoretical discussions. While our work is constantly informed by academic research, our focus is on praxis: “boots on the ground” civic work on our campuses and in our communities. Our commitment to student learning outcomes, which has led to a collaborative focus on civic assessment tools, is one illustration of this focus on students.

A Robust Partnership
We began our partnership over four years ago at ADP’s 2008 Annual Meeting in Baltimore, where we discussed how to launch a project patterned after ADP’s work with state colleges and universities but reflecting the distinctive mission and realities of community colleges. The following year, at the 2009 ADP Annual Meeting in Providence, a dozen representatives from community colleges and partner organizations met to discuss initial formation. The “rich soil” of the ADP Annual Meeting nurtured our planning, and we held our first joint meeting in June 2011 in Orlando, with around thirty-five participants from numerous community colleges presenting their projects and sharing insights and experiences with each other and with ADP colleagues. By the time we formally launched TDC in November 2011, the partnership with ADP had been seamlessly woven into the new community college initiative.

Our second joint annual meeting, held in 2012 in San Antonio, provided programmatic opportunities for collaboration and campus action (see sidebar). ADP’s initiatives gave community college initiators a rich menu of civic practices to replicate and implement, as well as an array of national programs to join. To this programmatic palette, community colleges added their own examples of robust local organizing endeavors and engaged student participation, represented at the conference through student-led presentations. The variety and depth of offerings at the Annual Meeting has increased dramatically as a result of our collaboration. We will hold our next annual meeting on June 6–8, 2013, in Denver; more information can be found on our websites.

TDC cemented the partnership by housing its national coordinator at the AASCU offices in Washington, DC. AASCU’s generosity and vision in hosting the TDC coordinator have broken down traditional fences dividing higher education sectors and provided access to resources and infrastructure that were essential as TDC launched its national project. The co-location of project leadership has proved immensely beneficial to both projects, facilitating strategizing and operational implementation. Moreover, the partnership between state colleges and community colleges working together to support students’ civic learning and democratic engagement provides a novel, and arguably transformational, symbol of inter-sector collaboration to the rest of American higher education.

Bridging Multiple Gaps
The future of our partnership lies in targeting another gap that we must mind, the one that exists between our two sectors of higher education. The compelling reality is that roughly 50 percent of graduates from AASCU institutions have transferred from local community colleges to complete their bachelor’s degrees. Although our institutions...
share these students, our respective sectors have operated far too often as discrete silos without coherently linked programs. In TDC and ADP’s common vision of the future, our institutions will forge partnerships on behalf of our shared students and shared communities through civic engagement initiatives and democratic practice. We envision community-based partnerships between state colleges and community colleges in which faculty work across institutional boundaries to build seamless curricular, cocurricular, and extracurricular opportunities for students.

Imagine faculty working collaboratively to articulate courses between lower and upper divisions that enable students to develop their civic skills continuously as they move through their associate’s degree courses and into their bachelor’s degree requirements. Imagine civic engagement experiences where students pursue lasting relationships with nonprofits and educational partners in their communities as they move through their academic careers, from community college to state college. Imagine communities where students are actively engaged in civic life, addressing local policy issues in a sustained and purposeful way throughout their degree programs and then pursuing long-term employment or civic engagement in their cities and towns. Some of our member colleges, such as Heartland Community College (HCC) and Illinois State University (ISU), are already building such partnerships. In an intentional effort to create seamless opportunities for students to develop their political and civic engagement skills when transitioning from HCC to ISU, the two institutions began collaborating on voter education drives and convening forums on compelling political issues. They have now connected their curricula, with a new curriculum sequence in civic engagement at HCC that articulates directly into ISU’s new minor in civic engagement and responsibility. ADP and TDC aim to foster similar collaborations between their schools across the country.

As public institutions of higher education, TDC and ADP schools share a historic mission rooted in the work of democracy. Whether community colleges or state colleges and universities, our institutions are resolutely committed to preparing students for lives of democratic citizenship. This resolve entails minding the gaps between our common mission and the challenging realities we face in our democracy and in our communities, as well as the gaps between our respective sectors of higher education. Our new partnership is already proving invaluable in our pursuit of this shared mission, for the lasting benefit of our students and our communities.  

More information about ADP and TDC is available on their websites: http://www.aascu.org/programs/ADP/ and http://thedemocracycommitment.org/.

ADP/TDC Civic Initiatives

The American Democracy Project, The Democracy Commitment, and their member institutions offer an array of programs along a continuum from service learning to political advocacy and civic action. Selected examples include:

- **Stewardship of Public Lands**: This annual week-long faculty seminar at Yellowstone National Park focuses on controversies about public land use.

- **eCitizenship**: This partnership with the Center for the Study of Citizenship at Wayne State University examines how emerging technologies, particularly social networks, support and facilitate civic and political engagement.

- **Civic Health**: The Campus and Community Civic Health Initiative, a partnership with the National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC), seeks to assess and improve indicators related to political engagement, volunteering, social trust, and social connectedness, among others.

- **Global Engagement**: Focused on educating globally competent citizens, this initiative has produced a national blended-learning course, a faculty toolkit, and series of faculty development institutes.

- **Engage the Election 2012**: Partnering with national organizations and programs, colleges pursued a variety of events related to the national election, including voter registration and voter information drives, candidate forums, and election night events.

- **Community Learning Partnerships**: This national network of programs prepares students for careers in community organizing, community and economic development, and advocacy to improve quality of life for residents in low-income communities.

- **Civic Assessment Efforts**: In addition to conducting campus audits, ADP and TDC campuses are participating in a joint AASCU–AAC&U project compiling assessment measures to define civic learning, one of the five pillars of the Degree Qualifications Profile.
Cooperating Across the Atlantic: Helping Realize Higher Education’s Democratic Mission

[TRANSFORMATIVE PARTNERSHIPS]

SJur Bergan, head of the Education Department at the Council of Europe and series editor of the Council of Europe Higher Education Series

IRA HARKAVY, chair of the US Steering Committee of the International Consortium for Higher Education, Civic Responsibility, and Democracy and associate vice president and director of the Barbara and Edward Netter Center for Community Partnerships, University of Pennsylvania

Democratic societies need to be constantly reimagined. To help catalyze this process, the higher education community must take the lead in remediying our lack—as individuals and as societies—of understanding, of imagination, and of commitment to democratic practice and action. By developing ideas and creating new pathways for engagement with community and societal partners, higher education can not only reimagine, but also revitalize and sustain inclusive and just democratic societies.

In cooperation and collaboration with several other partners, the International Consortium for Higher Education, Civic Responsibility, and Democracy and the Council of Europe aim to reinvigorate higher education’s role in democracy. By learning from each other’s experience working at local, national, continental, and global levels to help higher education serve not only economies, but societies, we hope to realize the promise of democracy for each and every citizen.

**Background**

The International Consortium for Higher Education, Civic Responsibility, and Democracy (IC) was established in 1999 to explain and advance higher education’s contributions to democracy on college and university campuses, in local communities, and across society. With executive offices housed at the University of Pennsylvania, the IC is composed of representatives from the United States (with steering committee members from the American Council on Education, the Association of American Colleges and Universities, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, Campus Compact, and NASPA) and other countries throughout the world.

The IC works in cooperation with the Council of Europe (CoE), the oldest European intergovernmental organization, founded in 1949 to promote democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. The CoE has grown from ten original members to a pan-European institution of forty-seven member countries. Fifty countries participate in its activities on education and culture, with additional participation from nongovernmental partners such as the International Association of Universities, the European Wergeland Centre, the Magna Charta Observatory, and the European Students’ Union.

Two political declarations formed the background for the cooperation between the IC and the CoE. On the CoE’s fiftieth anniversary in May 1999, its Committee of Ministers adopted the Budapest Declaration, which highlights education’s fundamental role in promoting active participation of all individuals at all levels of democratic life and calls for action to promote democratic values and practices in all CoE member states (Council of Europe 1999). In the same year in the United States, Campus Compact advanced its Presidents’ Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education, challenging “higher education to re-examine its public purposes and its commitments to the democratic ideal... [and] to become engaged, through actions and teaching, with its communities” (Campus Compact 1999). Initially signed by fifty-one US college and university presidents in July 1999, the Presidents’ Declaration now has close to seven hundred signatories.

**Key Activities**

The IC and the CoE launched their cooperation in 1999 with a project on the University as a Site of Citizenship, part of a broader CoE initiative on Education for Democratic Citizenship. The project’s pilot study explored how institutions of higher education were supporting democratic values and practices, assessed their capabilities to promote democracy, and examined how university resources can improve higher education’s contributions to democracy on campus, in the local community, and in broader societies. Conducted by fifteen colleges and universities in the United States, thirteen in Europe, five in South Africa, eight in Australia, and ten in Korea, the study resulted in two publications (Planter 2004; Winter, Wiseman, and Muirhead 2005).

In 2003, IC and CoE leadership proposed the creation of a research seminar with a protocol that could be adapted by faculty globally. The University of Pennsylvania created the pilot, which became a faculty–student collaborative research seminar titled The Democracy Project. The seminar is designed to measure the impact of college and university education on students’ democratic dispositions, competencies, and responsibilities and has served as an example for other colleges and universities around the world (Dubin 2007).

The cooperation has also continued around a series of conferences: The Responsibility of Higher Education for a Democratic Culture (Strasbourg 2006); Universities, Democratic Culture,
Learning from Contrasts
What brings an American nongovernmental organization and a European intergovernmental organization together to work for the democratic mission of higher education? What inspires other partners to join the cooperation’s activities? In short, the opportunity to develop similar frameworks by learning from our contrasting approaches to higher education’s role in supporting democracy.

Broad Vision
On both sides of the Atlantic, CoE and IC leadership agree that democratic institutions and laws are important but not sufficient for the development of true democracy. True democracy cannot exist without a set of attitudes and behaviors that enable institutions and laws to work effectively in practice. The existence of these attitudes and behaviors among all citizens is what the CoE and the IC refer to as democratic culture. Many higher education leaders in the United States and Europe agree that higher education should play an important role in developing democratic culture, and that democracy is impossible without democratic education. Nonetheless, they in some respects define the precise role of higher education differently.

Public debate in both the United States and Europe often implies that preparation for the labor market is higher education’s sole purpose. This impression is challenged in the United States by organizations like the Association of American Colleges and Universities and institutional leaders who are committed to advancing democratic society in addition to building the economy. Similarly, the CoE has defined higher education’s four main purposes as:

- preparation for the labor market;
- preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies;
- personal development;
- development and maintenance of a broad, advanced knowledge base (Bergan 2005; Council of Europe 2007).

The CoE sees these purposes as equally important and as complementary rather than contradictory. The Communiqués of the European Higher Education Area (Bologna Process) have further affirmed higher education’s multiple aims. Nonetheless, this broad vision of higher education is less popular in Europe than in the United States.

Community Engagement
Many US higher education institutions see themselves as advancing democracy (Benson, Harkavy, and Puckett 2007), often by working with their local communities. For example, the University of Pennsylvania has decided that it cannot realize its civic mission or fulfill its role as a leading research university without engaging with its local community of West Philadelphia. As described in its 2008–09 financial report, “At Penn, local engagement is one of the core tenets of Penn’s strategic vision for moving from excellence to eminence—and is an integral part of the University’s mission. Students and faculty from across Penn’s 12 schools integrate classroom learning with community service in a way that distinguishes Penn as both a world-class teaching and research institution and a good neighbor” (University of Pennsylvania 2010, 3). Other examples of locally engaged US institutions include the University at Buffalo, Augsburg College, Miami Dade College, and De Anza College. In Europe, Queen’s University Belfast played an essential role in bringing together the Catholic and Protestant communities of Northern Ireland during the period between the 1960s and 1990s known as “the Troubles,” pioneering policies that...
institutions and their communities. This approach could be a useful model for other parts of the world.

Community colleges are another important part of the US higher education system that is largely misunderstood abroad. In the US context, these institutions exemplify the role higher education can play in furthering equity and social cohesion by offering opportunities to many who might not otherwise have enrolled in college. Anchor institutions like Miami Dade and De Anza demonstrate for non-US partners that broad access is eminently compatible with high academic standards.

**Democratic Practice**

Higher education institutions must not only educate for democracy, but also practice it. In Europe, faculty, students, and staff play an important role in institutional governance. In the traditional European governance model, faculty hold a majority of seats on the institutional governance body, and the rector is a tenured professor elected by the academic community. Although European institutional leaders are increasingly elected or hired from outside the institution and governance bodies may now include considerable external representation, participatory governance remains an important feature of European higher education. At stake currently is not whether faculty, staff, and students should participate, but how great a say they should have.

Europe has a particularly strong tradition of student representation. Students participate in institutional governance in all European countries and in systems governance in most, normally through the national student union. The European Students’ Union, composed of national unions, is involved in the development of the European Higher Education Area. It also advocates on issues of importance to European students. US higher education could draw on Europe’s experience in strengthening students’ participation in institutional governance.

**Governmental Leadership**

The role of US governmental officials is very different from that of Europe’s public authorities. The United States has many models for government support and involvement in institutional governance, including at the level of funding, where public colleges and universities are currently facing significant cutbacks at the state level. In contrast, European public authorities take primary responsibility for the higher education system and framework, often through detailed legislation. They also play a more active role in financing higher education, whether through direct funding or financial assistance to the great majority of students attending public and many private institutions. In many countries, public authorities set admission goals or quotas linked to public funding. They also determine the degree system and provide for quality assurance. Oversight by public authorities is not seen as limiting academic freedom and institutional autonomy, but rather as providing a framework for it (Council of Europe 2012).

**Conclusion**

European and American higher education have much to learn from each other. We also have much to learn from collaboration with our partner academics and policymakers from other countries and organizations. By working in cooperation, the IC and the CoE seek to strengthen higher education’s role in creating humane, diverse, democratic societies.

To learn more, visit the IC website at www.internationalconsortium.org or the CoE website at www.coe.int.

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**REFERENCES**


My first trip to Belize was in December 2005. After my faculty partner (who had conducted an exploratory trip) stepped off the initiative thirty-six hours before departure, I arrived in the jungle with a team of students from Defiance College’s McMaster School for Advancing Humanity. We had little logistical information and no established on-site partner, but we had made lodging arrangements with the NGO Programme for Belize (PFB) at the Hill Bank research station.

On arrival, I had a frank conversation with Ivan Gillett, the PFB ranger who had guided us to Hill Bank. I told Ivan that the McMaster team wanted to mobilize student and faculty research to work with communities at the periphery of the Rio Bravo Conservation and Management Area (RBCMA), a 260,000-acre sustainable forestry reserve that PFB managed. In response, Ivan revealed that PFB was struggling because those periphery communities, prohibited from using the land they had once farmed and hunted, felt animosity toward PFB’s work. Ivan suspected that bringing researchers to help the communities move toward more sustainable development would assist in illustrating PFB’s positive impacts.

As of 2012, the McMaster program has facilitated over ninety individual but interconnected student and faculty research projects across several communities in northern Belize. Students and faculty collaborate in year-long learning communities to further these community-driven projects, with each year’s participants working with a network of new and established partners during a two-to-three-week site visit. (I described the McMaster School, for which I am the administrator, and the Belize initiative, for which I am a faculty fellow, in detail in the Fall 2009 issue of Diversity & Democracy.) The McMaster School now has initiatives in Belize, Cambodia, and Ghana, each of which has evolved in response to location, culture, opportunity, partnerships, and personalities.

Since my first trip to Belize, I have learned much about developing sustainable, community-based international partnerships. While each is unique, the McMaster School’s sustainable partnerships share some inherent characteristics:

1. All partners (both from the college and in the community) are committed to building on the strengths of the community and of the researchers.
2. All partners are willing to make significant investments in student learning by providing input on undergraduate research and contributing to students’ development of cross-cultural knowledge.
3. All partners are willing to invest in joint projects with positive measurable outcomes for human well-being.

The framework described below and illustrated in Figure 1 provides one approach to developing such partnerships. I created this framework in the context of the McMaster School’s international collaborations, but I invite readers to apply their own experiences in refining and modifying its tenets to fit their needs.

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**FIGURE 1. Framework for Partnership Development**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPLORATION</th>
<th>FOCUS</th>
<th>INVESTMENT</th>
<th>SUSTAINABILITY</th>
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**Exploration Phase**
- Survey of partnership and site potential
- Survey of logistical feasibility

The key to success when exploring potential partnerships is to do more listening than talking. Meet face-to-face with potential partners to learn their goals and objectives, concerns and challenges. It may be helpful to conduct a conversational survey or a SWOT analysis (assessing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) that culminates in a village or school meeting.
attended by all stakeholders. Each individual project should be predicated by such an evaluation process.

The exploration phase should also include a survey of logistical feasibility. Start small (for example, by limiting the targeted geographical area) to maximize resources and give adequate attention to each initial partner. Shift resource allocations over time to create more opportunities in and around the original site.

During our first visit, PFB connected us with several possible partners in the agricultural communities bordering the RBCMA, and we decided to conduct a conversational survey of agricultural practices to learn more about the issues facing these communities. Our survey revealed that farmers were concerned about the high cost of fertilizer and interested in reducing those costs. These findings framed our work in the focus phase during our second visit.

Focus Phase
- Evaluation of the potential to effect change
- Evaluation of the match between needs/issues and resources/expertise
- Evaluation of the potential for mutual benefit (student learning and community impact)

An initiative’s aims and projected outcomes should establish parameters for the focus phase’s evaluation process. For McMaster initiatives, the goal is to identify a need that can be realistically researched and remediated with the expertise and resources available. To align with our goals, a research project needs to produce change, remediation, or improvement through collaborative knowledge creation that substantively incorporates undergraduate research without requiring more resources or expertise than our team can provide.

Students from different disciplines can participate in the focus phase by helping to evaluate the potential of multidisciplinary solutions to address a partner’s challenges. This exercise can underscore the multifaceted nature of complex real-world problems: the team may discover that partners and projects overlap, and that even partners with distinct agendas operate within complex social systems. By developing partnerships with a diverse set of on-site stakeholders, the research team may be able to address overarching issues (see sidebar on page 19).

In my experience, community partners are very willing to work with faculty and students to ensure that research has positive impacts for both students and the community. Community-based knowledge not only contributes to each initiative’s effectiveness, but also enhances the potential for student learning. Students learn flexibility as they adapt conceptual knowledge to realistic constructs, and they grow intellectually and personally by viewing information or data from a perspective that is different from their own.

These principles applied to our work with Belizean farmers, who possess significant agricultural expertise but often lack access to information that the McMaster Program is well-positioned to provide. Having identified the farmers’ concerns about fertilizer costs during the exploration phase, we decided in the focus phase to conduct a soil nutrient analysis to determine whether changes in fertilizer use might be merited. This project would make use of students’ research skills while simultaneously addressing the farmers’ needs and PFB’s priorities. We thus began conducting soil sample evaluation during our second trip to Belize, bridging the focus and investment phases even as faculty and students began the exploration phase anew with different sectors of the community.

Investment Phase
- Building a foundation of trust
- Moving toward a collective goal with effective incremental outcomes
- Assuring repeatability through a commitment of time, effort, and resources

While sustainable partnerships often evolve through personal ties between individuals, it is important to proactively establish a foundation of trust through relationships that are both personal and institutional—for example, by sending both new and established leaders on visits to an initiative’s site. Balancing investments in interpersonal and institutional relationships can allow for broader participation over time and help secure the project’s long-term sustainability.

Sustainable partnerships require incremental development toward a collective goal, with small steps evidencing positive impact over time. It is important to keep the incremental nature of this work in mind when measuring community outcomes, which will likely manifest one family, one school, one village at a time. Substantial results can also be obtained one student at a time. International community-based research combines several elements of what George Kuh has called high-impact educational practices, including community-based learning, diversity/global learning, and undergraduate research (2008). Requiring intentional commitment to tasks, interaction about important issues, and engagement with individuals from different cultures, these practices provide students the opportunity to apply their knowledge, skills, and dispositions in different settings. The overall impacts of these practices on student learning will grow as more students participate.

To secure the long-term impact of incremental gains, the investment phase needs to establish a basis for repeatability: a willingness to invest time,
effort, and resources that can pay dividends. The longest-lasting partnerships often generate the greatest impacts, the deepest research opportunities, and the greatest potential for student learning.

Our work in the investment phase with Belizean farmers resulted directly from our soil analysis, which clearly indicated overfertilization. We communicated these findings to the farmers and advised them about optimal fertilizer use. Once the farmers began implementing our recommendations and seeing cost savings, our reputation spread throughout the community, and more farmers approached us to request soil analyses. They also began identifying additional research questions for students to explore, eventually leading to a series of projects focused on such issues as water quality and entrepreneurship development in communities bordering the RBCMA.

**Sustainability Phase**
- Reevaluation of overall goals
- Assessment of outcomes via feedback from all stakeholders
- Repositioning the project to evolve dynamically

In the sustainability phase, program leaders ensure that the initiative, now firmly established, will not stagnate but rather adapt in response to changing issues, modes of engagement, and priorities. In this phase, program leaders reevaluate project goals in light of evolving factors.

It is critical to include feedback from partners in the assessment process. After helping to facilitate change, step back and allow the community partner to adjust and reassess. This process preserves the partner’s right to steer the course of the continuing project. Having multiple partnerships in a single geographic location can be critically important at this stage, preventing the institution from becoming totally dependent on any one partner for project ideas and, conversely, community partners from becoming dependent on the institution for solutions.

Students can assist with the assessment process by conducting community impact surveys and site condition assessments, comparing their findings to information gathered during the exploration and focus phases. For example, later this year, a McMaster student scholar will conduct an impact survey using a modified version of an earlier assessment to determine whether outreach to communities on the periphery of the RBCMA has continued to reduce animosity between these communities and PFB.

In addition to measuring community impact, it is critically important to embed assessment of student learning at all phases of the initiative—pre-trip, on-site, and post-trip. In the McMaster program, we assess student learning through a series of writing, video, and discussion prompts, as well as through students’ research projects. We also use the Cross Cultural Adaptive Inventory developed by Kelley and Meyers to assess changes in students’ ability to function effectively in another culture. Our assessments have shown that students are gaining a greater understanding of their professional roles in a global context and an enhanced sense of efficacy, empathy, and responsibility to positively impact humanity.

Our work with agricultural communities in Belize has evolved along with the farmers’ changing questions and priorities. Our relationship with PFB has also evolved as the NGO assists us in navigating logistical challenges, reviews our research findings, and provides feedback on the future direction of projects. Despite what initially seemed to be diametrically opposed goals, PFB and our community partners have now developed areas of notable synergy through their work with McMaster Belize.

**Conclusion**

Negotiating long-term partnerships in small developing countries has inherent challenges, but it is possible provided your initial experience builds trust in the community. We and our community partners have now reached a place of true collaboration, where we jointly create knowledge and seek solutions through scholarship and practical application in context.

**Project Examples: Research to Improve Economic Development**

Over the years, the McMaster School for Advancing Humanity has worked with an agricultural village in Belize on a series of research projects addressing the village’s economic challenges.

- Several biology students and a faculty member from physical sciences have worked with farmers to monitor soil nutrient levels, limit chemical fertilizer use, and control pests naturally, reducing both monetary costs and negative environmental impacts.
- A psychology major helped develop a women’s group that started a small restaurant in the village. A business major is continuing the project by helping the women’s group develop a business and marketing plan to secure profit margins.
- A business student worked to develop a pipeline to US markets for art and indigenous crafts, monetizing a valuable activity that formerly seemed like a luxury to community members.

These efforts are improving educational opportunities for both McMaster students and Belizean students, with reductions in poverty allowing more families to send their children to high school.

—Mary Ann Studer

**REFERENCE**

[PRACTICE AND PERSPECTIVE]

Democratizing Teaching and Learning through Real Dialogue across Differences

CARMEN WERDER, director of the Teaching–Learning Academy at Western Washington University

Tell all the truth but tell it slant—
Success in Circuit lies
—Emily Dickinson

Now in its twelfth year, the Teaching–Learning Academy (TLA) at Western Washington University (WWU) is a dialogue forum bringing together students, staff, faculty, and community members around a shared question about learning. The TLA began in 2001 as part of WWU’s participation in the Carnegie Campus Conversation program, sponsored by the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. It has since evolved into a hub for dialogue aimed at studying and enhancing the learning culture at WWU and sustaining student voices in co-inquiry about their own learning. The TLA sponsors campus forums and other alliances, but at its heart are the dialogues that convene mixed groups of faculty, staff, administrators, community members, and students.

Structured Informality

Approximately 3,500 participants have joined in TLA dialogue, with an average of ninety and as many as 150 participants each quarter. During the academic year, four dialogue groups meet every other week for eighty-minute sessions that include a mix of participants. After receiving a conversation prompt, participants from each dialogue group break into smaller dialogue clusters before reconvening to compare notes. Some students earn one communication practicum credit for participating, but many simply volunteer for multiple quarters because they appreciate the chance to be heard and to connect with others across campus. Faculty, staff, and community participation is voluntary and is often prompted by a desire to hear what students (and others) really think.

Together, fall quarter participants craft a question to explore and answer in the winter and spring quarters. For example, the 2007–08 TLA question asked, “What keeps us from genuine dialogue across differences?” Conversations over subsequent quarters revealed one potential answer: leading the conversation with the word “diversity” can foreclose conversation in some contexts. The co-inquiry suggested that rather than making diversity the topic of dialogue, it may be more effective within WWU’s campus culture to focus on shared questions and create an environment where all voices matter.

To cultivate such an environment, the TLA practices “structured informality”—which some participants have termed “parlor talk” (Werder et al. 2010)—to describe a space where co-inquiry happens in conversation. Participants avoid mentioning their titles as they chomp on pretzels and respond to conversation starters linked to that year’s big question. Work–study students on the TLA staff transcribe dialogue group notes and comments, which then become part of the “highlights” that staff compile and distribute across groups so participants can see emerging findings.

Action-Oriented Dialogue

Conceptually and operationally, the TLA model is based on a continuum of conversation that privileges dialogue (geared toward exploring multiple views and achieving deeper understanding) over discussion (aimed at discovering a best answer) or debate (focused on persuading others) (Ellinor and Gerard 1998). Using a campus sculpture titled Rock Rings as its logo, the TLA creates a common space that participants can enter through their own portals/perspectives.

While TLA participants are eager to move toward institutional change initiatives, the agenda calls for conversations to emphasize the slow process of building deeper individual and collective understanding before proposing change. This “slow talk” approach is counter (American) culture and can be troubling to some participants (particularly students) who want to solve problems, not just talk about them. The fall quarter’s emphasis on framing the question and the winter and spring quarters’ focus on answering it make use of this tension.

TLA dialogues have resulted in measurable action. In response to the 2007–08 question about dialogue across differences, the group proposed and partnered with the WWU library to create an online dialogue forum now called Viking Village. (See table 1 for additional examples.) Another TLA contribution has been a cultural shift: the TLA has modeled a way for people with contrasting views to hear each other. TLA participants report that they often apply the dialogic approach in their own department and faculty governance meetings (with a former provost even calling for “a TLA-like dialogue”).

Circuitry for Change

How does the TLA forum work as a transformative partnership, and why has it endured? In a written dialogue about the importance of balancing a sense of
agency (individual self-efficacy) with a sense of communion (collective good), Marcia Baxter Magolda and Pamela Crosby intimate a possible explanation. In advocating for service learning, Crosby notes that its value comes from a “continuous interchange of ideas and conversations that cut across perceived differences that occur during the time of experience as well as the reflection afterward” (2011, 8). Thus the ongoing exchange of ideas, coupled with invitations to reflect during and afterward, provides the opportunity to balance regard for self and regard for others.

The TLA functions similarly. In fact, participants from WWU’s Center for Service-Learning liken the TLA to a service-learning initiative where the informal TLA structure serves needs of the formal university community. The TLA also fosters a sense of inclusion across campus by bringing diverse people together around shared questions about learning. If focusing directly on diversity and difference stifles conversation, it may be better to support diversity indirectly by creating a climate where all voices contribute to making the learning environment better for everyone.

According to one TLA participant, a staff member who also led our HANDS (Helping Admit Nontraditional and Diverse Students) program, “TLA led me to dream, to hope for the future, and to expand my limits of problem-solving (a mental exercise I have since become addicted to).” That mental exercise, that habit of mind of seeking shared meaning, is the TLA’s focus. By deliberately promoting civil listening—listening as if we could be wrong—the TLA creates a democratizing forum where participants’ differences and similarities work collectively for the individual and the common good. The TLA’s success lies in its circuitry—its structure for ongoing, real dialogue where participants tell their own truths in the pursuit of shared truths. ☀️

For more information about the TLA, visit http://library.wwu.edu/tla or read Daniel Espinoza-Gonzalez’s article on page 22.

REFERENCES


**TABLE 1. Teaching–Learning Academy Questions and Action Items**

Each fall, WWU’s Teaching–Learning Academy develops a new question to prompt dialogue and action over subsequent quarters of that academic year. Past questions and their resulting action items have included:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>ACTION ITEM</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do we count as the features of an optimal learning environment? (2003–04)</td>
<td>Created a document on “Interactive Learning Spaces” that was incorporated into university facilities planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What role, if any, should the university play in the development of ethical reasoning or civic engagement? (2004–05)</td>
<td>Partnered with the Center for Service-Learning in proposing a learning commons on local waterfront property (under consideration).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do we mean by a sustainable, reflective learning culture? (2009–10)</td>
<td>Proposed and secured external funding for a reflective garden on campus (under construction).</td>
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<td>How do we engage multiple voices to strengthen WWU as a twenty-first-century liberal arts university? (2011–12)</td>
<td>Through a series of focus groups, developed suggestions to enhance the general education program (under consideration).</td>
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Finding Value in My Voice

DANIEL ESPINOZA-GONZALEZ, senior majoring in English literature at Western Washington University

Like many freshmen, I spent the first few days of my college experience mostly wide-eyed, overwhelmed by the enormity of Western Washington University and the number of people I did not know. I was outgoing in high school, but my transition to college had me so dumbfounded that I would walk quietly from classroom to classroom saying nothing more than “here.”

In Bellingham, I felt far from home. Born and raised in a diverse community in Seattle, I was accustomed to encountering people with different cultures, skin colors, religious and political beliefs, socioeconomic statuses, and lifestyles. Differences in languages and communication styles were an important part of this diversity, and my style of speaking is a conglomeration of my parents’ Spanish, my black friends’ slang, my sister’s bluntness, and the English I learned in public school. When I arrived at Western, I suspected that my communication style would be different from that of other students, and that my thoughts and opinions might be unwelcome.

With this suspicion in the back of my mind, I walked into the first biweekly conversation at the Teaching–Learning Academy (TLA) to earn credit for an education course. Seeing students, professors, staff, and administrators cramped into a giant circle, drinking coffee and eating pretzels, I quickly became worried. I couldn’t help but think, “What did I just walk into?” For four of the five sessions that quarter, I was a fly on the wall, observing everyone else as they engaged in shared discourse. Other participants encouraged me to speak, yet I did not feel it was my place. With so many knowledgeable elders present, I felt that I had nothing to contribute.

That quarter, the TLA focused on the interconnections between people at Western. During the fifth week, our conversation moved to the topic of diversity on campus. I sat in a small group with my education professor, two students, a staff member, and an outspoken lady whom I did not know. As I sat silently listening to this lady’s thoughts, I heard her express an idea with which I did not fully agree. Moments later, I began gently voicing my opinions and answering the lady’s questions. Shortly after our dialogue, I learned that this complete stranger was a staff member—and the wife of the university’s president. Yet despite the differences in our status, no one had ignored me or treated me like a naïve student. Instead, everyone in my small group had encouraged me to continue speaking. I had never felt so acknowledged and appreciated by people I barely knew. That moment was a pivotal point in my college experience. After being encouraged to contribute, I had spoken and was rewarded for it. All people, especially students, should have such an opportunity.

For the past four years, I have consistently participated in TLA dialogues. During that time, the TLA has provided me with the chance to learn from people with differing beliefs and to feel that as a student, I can be a contributing citizen alongside respected faculty, staff, and administrators. Every person enters a TLA dialogue with a unique set of experiences and perspectives, and by listening to and developing an understanding for one another, we bring our community one step closer to a truly democratic, inclusive society.

My participation in the TLA has empowered me to contribute to my campus community by taking on other leadership positions. As a resident advisor, I have fostered relationships with new and returning students, making them feel as welcomed and appreciated as I have in the TLA. I have also applied what I learned through the TLA in my work with the Ethnic Student Center, an organization supporting students of color and their allies. Keeping my first quarter experience in mind, I do my best to ensure that every student who walks into the center feels at home and cherished—a feeling I was grateful to experience myself, thanks to the Teaching–Learning Academy.

To learn more about the Teaching–Learning Academy, see Carmen Werder’s article on page 20.
Partnerships for Learning and Community at Pālolo Valley Homes

**[PRACTICE AND PERSPECTIVE]**

**Partnerships for Learning and Community at Pālolo Valley Homes**

- **JUDITH KIRKPATRICK**, professor of English at Kapi‘olani Community College
- **ULLA HASAGER**, civic engagement specialist in the College of Social Sciences and instructor of ethnic studies and anthropology at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

It’s family night at the Pālolo ‘Ohana Learning Center (POLC), and about sixty people are gathered around tables in front of a large television screen. They are residents of Pālolo Valley Homes LP, along with service-learning students and faculty members from the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (UHM) and Kapi‘olani Community College (KCC). Emotions are running high as a Native Hawaiian woman advocates for action to promote health care and education for Marshallese immigrants, with strong support from Sāmoans, Vietnamese, Chuukese, Pohnpeians, and others present. We have just watched the documentary *A New Island: Marshallese in Arkansas*, introduced to the group by a Marshallese undergraduate student at the weekly Pālolo ‘Ohana Program (POP) night.

POP is a family program that has been conducted for several years at Pālolo. It is open to anybody who wants to attend, including a small group of faculty and students from the surrounding institutions of higher education who help POLC staff run the program. Participants share a meal, play, do artwork, and discuss a wide range of topics of interest to the families—immigrant and employment rights, drug abuse and suicide prevention, cyberbullying, the Hawaiian sovereignty movement, love magic, sign language. The film nights are a new addition and the brainchild of longtime community leader Dahlia Asuega, now Pālolo Homes Resident Services Manager. When Asuega suggested showing documentaries on issues related to residents’ homelands and immigration, some KCC and UHM faculty members were skeptical. Would Pālolo families really want to spend an evening watching and discussing the same documentaries that faculty show students? Asuega affirmed that they would.

The success of POP illustrates how, in a community whose members live under daily stress and in competition for meager resources, people are eager to learn about other ethnic groups and take action on their behalf. As the film night described above illustrates, this may mean coming together across strong interethnic prejudices such as those against “Micronesians” (mostly understood as Marshallese and Chuukese). For fifteen years, Pālolo residents, faculty, and students have planned and learned together across differences in gender, age, class, ethnicity, income, and educational level. Their openness and sense of community is the source of the strength of our civic engagement work.

**The Beginnings of Partnership**

Since 1995, Kapi‘olani Community College and its service-learning program have worked to promote technological literacy, educational interest, and civic engagement among the residents of Pālolo Valley Homes, a 305-unit affordable housing complex in urban Honolulu. Pālolo residents are primarily from low-income Hawaiian, Sāmoan, and Micronesian families, and children from the community comprise 98 percent of students at the nearby Pālolo Elementary School and more than 60 percent of students at Jarrett Middle School.

In 1998, Pālolo residents asked if KCC could provide computers for “the Hale,” a small blue house in the middle of the housing complex that they wanted to convert into a learning center for children. ( Pronounced “HAH-leh,” hale means “house” in the Hawaiian language.) By 2000, a modest technology center was up and running, stocked with furniture discarded by the university and nearly two dozen networked computers managed by KCC and UHM service-learning students. At the height of its activity, the nine-hundred-square-foot center was often overrun with up to eighty children, with two or more service-learning students overseeing operations. Although a recipe for occasional chaos, the experiment was a great success. “Our residents already had seen organizations leave the community if there was no funding,” said Dahlia Asuega. “But UHM/KCC were committed to running the center whether there was money or not. That made our relationship more of a friendship than a partnership.” The friendship is still evolving, inspiring other programs locally and nationally and serving as a model for building campus–community partnerships.

**Growth and Expansion**

By 2002, a group of leaders from the community as well as public and private institutions—including the Hawai‘i Department of Education, KCC, UHM, and Chaminade University of Honolulu (CUH)—had created a loosely organized Pālolo Pipeline Program with the overall goal of improving educational opportunities for residents with the help of service-learning students and faculty. But as residents pointed out, educational levels cannot improve without connected improvements in
We thus expanded the Pipeline to include a range of other activities, such as health programs and work with the elderly. The Pipeline’s first major grant focused on early childhood education and helped us build strong connections between community partners and schools with the help of service-learning students and paid student leaders. Three years of support from the AmeriCorps VISTA program was central to this work.

In 2008, under the leadership of KCC faculty, Mutual Housing Association of Hawai’i (nonprofit owner of Pālolo Valley Homes), and community representatives, the Pālolo Tenants Association received significant funding from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, NeighborWorks America, the State Farm insurance company, and the Oceanic Time-Warner Cable company to create a state-of-the-art learning center on the second floor of the community’s administration building. The Pālolo ‘Ohana Learning Center now has forty-five new desktop computers, twenty wireless laptops, an audiovisual editing room, a public health nurse’s station, a reading room, a demonstration kitchen, and ample space to hold classes, activities, and town-hall meetings. Two Pālolo Homes residents and former AmeriCorps VISTA members have been hired to monitor and run the center, which has an active board of community members, AmeriCorps VISTA members, and students and faculty who work together to coordinate programs and improvements.

Phenomenal Gains

Today, the Pālolo community has a strong presence in local life and media, and national leaders visit often. Need a story about improvements at an elementary school? Ask the principal of Pālolo Elementary. Need to learn from a model affordable housing community or community center? Visit Pālolo ‘Ohana Learning Center. Need a safe place for national and international students to learn about local community, native and immigrant groups? Bring them to Pālolo, where even the young children will patiently teach them about culture and language.

There are many measures of our work in the community: student grades, graduation rates, learning outcomes, employment, involvement in higher education, personal well-being, civic responsibility. One striking outcome is visible in Pālolo Elementary students’ standardized test scores, which have improved significantly since 2002 (see table 1), meaning that Pālolo Elementary is no longer classified as a “failing school” under No Child Left Behind. This kind of progress depends on the involvement of the whole community in attending to educational achievement.

Among college students participating in service learning at Pālolo, gains are reflected in increased critical thinking skills, civic responsibility, understanding of diversity and social justice issues, strong ethical reasoning, and a willingness to act on the issues they identify and discuss in their final papers and presentations. Critically, Pālolo residents of all ages are enrolling in college. While in college, many take leadership roles in the community as service-learning students, interns, federal work-study students, or student employees (see Stephen Maybir’s essay on page 25).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1. Pālolo Elementary School and Hawai’i State Average Math Scores, Grades 3, 4, and 5, Selected Years.</th>
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<td><strong>GRADE</strong></td>
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<td>4 Pālolo</td>
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<td>5 Pālolo</td>
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Back to the Hale with New Ideas
In 2011, Pālolo Homes’ Resident Services Manager asked the learning center advisory board to consider creating a Pālolo Discovery Science Center in the Hale. Such an investment would align with Pālolo Elementary’s robust new K–5 Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) sustainability curriculum.

To create the Science Discovery Center, the community and KCC have partnered with the National Science Foundation’s Hawai’i EPSCoR (Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research). EPSCoR funding has supported the purchase of two four-by-twelve-foot aquaponics units, a solar panel with display board for tracking alternative energy production, a laser cutter, a web-based mathematics acceleration program, and a 3-D laser printer. A Discovery Saturdays program engages Pālolo youth in learning about STEM careers while growing food, learning about renewable energy and water systems, and preparing the facility for an exterior facelift. Since 2010 the community, the KCC service-learning office, and the UHM College of Social Sciences’ Civic Engagement Program have also supported a STEM summer program for middle school students using principles developed by the National Science Foundation’s SENCER program (Science Education for a New Civic Engagement and Responsibility) to encourage young participants to consider STEM careers.

When KCC came to Pālolo Homes more than fifteen years ago, its goal was to promote computer literacy in a diverse community. That goal has morphed into an educational pipeline that has already sent fifty-two residents to college. The KCC/UHM/CUH/Pālolo friendship has made Pālolo a launching site to higher education and a breeding ground for civically engaged community participation for all involved.

Learning Collaboration from and for My Community
STEPHEN MAYBIR, president of the Pālolo Tenants Association, leader of several learning center programs, and student at Kapi’olani Community College

Pālolo Homes is the heart of our valley community. Since moving here with my beloved mother and three siblings, I have had the privilege of calling this special place home and of working with some of the most dedicated women in our community. From these women, I have learned the importance of collaboration in serving the community’s needs and fighting lingering stigmas and misconceptions imposed on us.

When exploring the community over the years, I was almost always drawn to the work of the residents’ association—especially its president, known affectionately as Aunty Dahlia. From her dedicated service and collaboration with key players, I continue to learn the art of community organizing and the importance of communication and teamwork in sustaining meaningful relationships.

Not long after meeting Aunty Dahlia, I encountered Judith Kirkpatrick, an English professor from Kapi’olani Community College (KCC). I found it strange to see this tall white lady walking freely about the property by herself. For hours on end every Sunday, Aunty Judi worked with the “geeks” (IT students) in the Hale, where they maintained the many computers donated by the University of Hawai’i at Mānoa (UHM) and KCC. In this humble building, I was first exposed to the idea of “service learning” and slowly began to understand the power of leveraging available resources to create “win–win” situations for all involved.

I was soon introduced to another dedicated woman, an academic from UHM and KCC named Ulla Hasager. Little did I know then that Dr. Hasager would one day be not only my AmeriCorps VISTA supervisor and professor at KCC, but also my life mentor.

Much of the work we do at Pālolo Valley Homes requires a strong understanding of the community’s needs, a knowledge of who the players are and how best to serve them in a collaborative way. Thanks to Aunty Dahlia, Aunty Judi, and Dr. Hasager, I have observed first-hand that when all parties properly communicate their questions, needs, and goals, we are able to combine our resources to effect change.

I am now president of the Pālolo Tenants Association, and in the short time since being elected, I have learned much about the role I play in this special place. I can’t say enough about the importance of working collaboratively, especially when resources are limited. As the collaboration between Pālolo and its higher education partners continues, the relationships, experiences, and many lessons learned along the way will help us sustain our commitment to serving our families and community and overcome shared challenges together.
Strengthening Immigrant Voices through Museum–Community College Partnerships

According to the report *Adult ESL and the Community College*, “ESL [English as a Second Language] is one of the fastest growing areas of need in the community college,” with immigrants (many of whom are not fluent in English) constituting up to 25 percent of community college students—a share that is expected to increase in the coming years (Crandall and Sheppard 2004, 5). As the report indicates, adult English language learners enter the classroom with a multiplicity of needs: some lack basic literacy and others possess high levels of education but lack English language skills. Higher education institutions will need to use a variety of pedagogical methods to meet the diverse requirements of this expanding population.

Just as community college demographics are changing, so ultimately will museum audiences. According to the report *Demographic Transformation and the Future of Museums*, 9 percent of core museum visitors in 2008 belonged to a racial or ethnic minority group, while these groups will become the new majority in the United States between 2040 and 2050 (Farrell and Medvedeva 2010, 9). The immigrant population is also expected to grow, from 12 percent of the US population in 2005 to 19 percent in 2050 (Passel and Cohn 2008). With these changes in mind, “it is specifically critical that museums understand […] the ways in which different constituencies engage with, and make meaning of, their museum experiences” (Stein, Garibay, and Wilson 2008, 184).

As the immigrant population increases, higher education institutions and museums can join forces to work innovatively with this potential constituency. To create such opportunities, project director Patricia Lannes collaborated with two Queensborough Community College faculty members, Margot Edlin and Kitty Bateman, to secure a three-year Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) National Leadership Grant supporting CALTA21, a model initiative Lannes had developed to bring English language learning into the museum setting. Drawing on the premise that visual literacy skills are transferrable to other literacies, CALTA21 uses art as a catalyst for language learning and the curriculum as a bridge connecting immigrant students to museums as sources of empowerment.

**Pillars of CALTA21**

The CALTA21 initiative aims to build the capacity of museum–community college partnerships to empower adult English language learners, increasing their comfort with institutions of higher education, community-based organizations, and cultural institutions while strengthening literacy and critical thinking skills. The model is supported by two cornerstones: a professional development institute and a ten-unit, thirty-hour curriculum.

CALTA21’s professional development institutes convene museum professionals and English language instructors from higher education and community-based organizations to learn, discuss, and analyze best practices for working with adult immigrant audiences. During each institute, participating partners share information about each other’s organizations and their constituents’ needs and strengths, building a solid foundation for the collaborative process. With an initial two-day meeting, the institute prepares English language instructors and museum educators to implement CALTA21’s student-driven curriculum in the classroom and at partner museums. A third institute day scheduled in the midst of the curriculum allows participants to reflect on these practices and the challenges therein.

The curriculum’s thread, “Identity and Portraiture,” is designed to use adult students’ background knowledge and immigrant experiences as conduits for encouraging their voices. Art addresses complex issues and stirs the viewer’s intellect and emotions, and viewers can respond to it unimpeded by language barriers. Language learners frequently use visual perception to construct knowledge, accessing higher-order thinking skills in their preferred language while practicing communication and meaning-making in the language they are learning. Art images and visual literacy thus become effective and powerful aids in language learning. Through facilitated discussions about art, students observe, find personal meaning, and build vocabulary and collective knowledge. They think critically about what they see, form opinions, and ground their opinions in an image—skills that they can then transfer to the practice of finding meaning in literary texts.

This process does more than build academic skills: it also builds cultural and social capital within students’ new civic contexts. As CALTA21 engages
adult literacy students from different cultures, religions, countries of origin, ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, and literacy levels in intercultural dialogue about identity, it empowers them to voice how they see themselves in the world and the issues that are important to them. Across the curriculum, students engage in cross-pollinating dialogue, validating their own native culture and exploring the cultures of their classmates and of their adopted home.

This initiative also builds museum literacy, teaching students how to join the museum community, take ownership of the discoveries they make there, and share those resources with their families or friends. During the final unit of the curriculum, students demonstrate their new empowerment by guiding families and friends on a museum visit. They leave the course as active participants in their new contexts, able to communicate more effectively in English and to understand the value of cultural resources in a democratic society.

**Toward the Future**

During the first grant year (2011–12), the project team held two professional development institutes and implemented the curriculum in partnerships across classrooms at the City University of New York (CUNY) and in El Museo del Barrio and the Rubin Museum of Art. In the second year (2012–13), the Godwin Ternbach Museum at Queens College and the Katonah Museum of Art will partner with programs within the CUNY system and Westchester Community College. The third year (2013–14) will be dedicated to disseminating CALTA21 at a national level through a symposium, online distribution of materials, and the establishment of new partnerships.

As museum and literacy program participants adapt the CALTA21 curriculum to meet their respective and shared goals, the team has learned that flexibility is a necessity. For example, scheduling visits that coincide with museum hours and classroom schedules can be challenging, and these issues often must be resolved on a case-by-case basis. Similarly, in addition to meeting with their partners, participating groups would benefit from meeting individually to address their specific needs and concerns. With these needs in mind, the project team is working to make the logistics, curriculum, and the institutes more adaptable.

As the project proceeds, CALTA21 continues to change and grow. The project team is seeking opportunities to expand to new implementation sites and is poised to apply the CALTA21 model in literacy programs and museums nationwide. For more information about CALTA21, visit www.CALTA21.org.

**CALTA21 Curriculum**

The CALTA21 English language learning curriculum consists of ten units conducted in both the classroom and the museum setting:

1. Portraiture and Photography: How Does a Portrait Show Who We Are?
2. Looking Back: Where We Come From
3. Being from Many Places, Belonging to Many Cultures, and Speaking Many Languages
4. Double Take: Our Multiple Identities
5. Preparing for an Art Museum Experience
6. Experiencing an Art Museum
7. Looking Forward: Imagining Our Future
8. Identity and Relationships
9. Getting Ready to Be a Museum Guide
10. Experiencing the Museum with Your Family and Friends


**REFERENCES**


Driving into South Memphis, one can imagine what it looked like when it became the city’s first planned industrial suburb. Although the tree-lined median has been removed, sturdy brick craftsman-style bungalows still line the wide parkway, just as they did in the early twentieth century. The neighborhood’s working- and middle-class status remained stable as its racial composition shifted from white to predominately African American in the 1950s. But by the 1970s, suburbanization, deindustrialization, desegregation, and disinvestment had transformed South Memphis into a struggling community facing deteriorating housing conditions, street violence, an active drug trade, and declining public schools.

Today, 21 percent of the neighborhood’s lots are vacant, 40 percent of commercial buildings stand unused, and more than 50 percent of children live below the poverty line (Lambert-Pennington and Reardon 2009, 54–58). Nonetheless, a strong base of long-time residents, neighborhood associations, block clubs, nonprofits, and churches is responding to the complex blend of challenges facing the neighborhood.

The evolution of our partnership with St. Andrew has required our faculty–student team to play a range of evolving roles, resulting in new relationships and pedagogical shifts along the way.

**A Partnership’s Evolution**

The partnership has convened faculty and students from UM’s Departments of Anthropology, City and Regional Planning, and Architecture to help neighborhood stakeholders envision and create a different future for the community. Our roles, research foci, and course content have shifted as our interdisciplinary findings have revealed new issues and questions throughout the three stages of our partnership.

In stage one (Fall 2008), the UM team helped St. Andrew conduct a program assessment. This included a history of the church’s community outreach efforts, accomplishments, and future hopes related to five program areas: Social Ministries; the Ernestine Rivers Childcare Center; Circles of Success Learning Academy (an elementary charter school); The Works, Inc., Community Development Corporation; and the Community Life Center.

In stage two (2009), all partners engaged in a participatory planning process. As St. Andrew sought a way to engage the broader community in conversation about the neighborhood’s future, the UM team suggested a participatory action research strategy that blended community organizing, education, and qualitative and quantitative methods to develop a resident-driven comprehensive redevelopment plan. Working with Pastor Robinson and The Works, Inc., we invited a group of stakeholders representing residents, local businesses, area churches and nonprofits, civic organizations, and city government to serve on an advisory committee. Eventually, we worked with over one thousand residents and twenty-five neighborhood organizations and churches on a variety of research activities, including a land use survey, in-depth interviews, focus groups, and a door-to-door survey.

These research activities formed the basis for a daylong Neighborhood Summit, where eight hundred residents and stakeholders vetted our findings, established a vision for the neighborhood, and set planning objectives and action priorities. Residents formed action teams and worked with UM students and faculty to brainstorm and develop action teams and worked with UM students and faculty to brainstorm and develop program and project strategies addressing key issues. Based on these conversations, UM students and faculty drafted the South Memphis Revitalization Action Plan, which residents and the Memphis City Council reviewed and adopted. Residents then identified their top
Engaged Curriculum and Pedagogy

Each stage of our partnership with the community has created new experiential learning opportunities and led to new research questions. In stage one, I worked with faculty teaching graduate classes in anthropology, architecture, and city and regional planning to organize the research and outreach timeline, developing a matrix of course topics, research strategies, and opportunities for our respective students to collaborate. Throughout the semester, students developed interview protocols, conducted door-to-door outreach, and engaged in group-oriented research. Using these methods, my anthropology graduate students examined St. Andrew’s model of faith-based development and explored questions about how participatory action research and asset-based community development differ from traditional approaches.

In stage two, graduate students in planning took the lead on many activities with support from undergraduate anthropology students enrolled in my American Communities course. For the anthropology students, the participatory planning process was an opportunity to see community-building first hand. Students paired with residents for door-to-door surveys, assisted with recruiting people to attend community meetings, and helped facilitate small group discussions and action team meetings. In biweekly debriefing sessions and their final papers, students considered how participatory action research can create avenues for cultural critique and community-derived solutions while exploring what anthropology and the anthropologist can contribute to neighborhood revitalization efforts.

During stage three, anthropology faculty and students as well as South Memphis residents have conducted an ongoing evaluation of the market, with an evaluation team co-led by me (a cultural anthropologist with a specialization in urban development and social inequalities) and my colleague Kathryn Hicks (a biological anthropologist with a specialization in race and health disparities and nutritional anthropology). Our research questions include: How do farmers’ markets fit into the urban food system of Memphis? How well does SMFM serve the neighborhood, and what can be done to improve the market? How does having access to fresh fruits and vegetables impact local residents’ diets?

This ongoing evaluation has led me to integrate literature on urban food systems, farmers’ markets, and food policy into my graduate and undergraduate Neighborhood Development and Social Entrepreneurship course. In addition to building a unit on local food policy advocacy and inviting speakers from local organizations, I have created opportunities for students to volunteer at SMFM. Students in my classes have assisted with research at the market, and several anthropology students have interned with The Works, Inc. and the farmers’ market.

Conclusion

UM’s long-term partnership with St. Andrew, The Works, Inc., and the residents of South Memphis has benefitted both students and the community. The partnership has resulted in tangible neighborhood improvements and afforded students opportunities to master methodological skills and course-specific learning objectives. Importantly, the longevity of the relationship has also allowed me to integrate service learning into my courses, with special attention to preparing students for work in the community.

REFERENCE

In Print

First-Generation College Students: Understanding and Improving the Experience from Recruitment to Commencement by Lee Ward, Michael J. Siegel, and Zebulun Davenport (Jossey-Bass 2012, $40 hardcover)
First-generation college students are a growing presence in American higher education, calling colleges and universities to attend to their specific contexts, assets, and challenges. This brief volume provides guidance to educators working to create systemic support for first-generation student success, with attention to the characteristics these students generally share and the interlocking factors that may affect their persistence. With specific examples of promising practices at a variety of higher education institutions (including high-impact practices like residential learning communities and service-learning courses), the book suggests possible frameworks for educators to build and assess an institutional approach to acknowledging, supporting, and affirming first-generation students.

The Engaged Campus: Certificates, Minors, and Majors as the New Community Engagement, edited by Dan W. Butin and Scott Seider (Palgrave Macmillan 2012, $32 paperback)
This volume grapples with the question of how educators can buttress higher education’s growing community engagement movement with formal academic programs. Urging that the time has come to join engaged practice with articulated theory, the editors and authors offer a series of chapters on how a wide range of certificates, minors, and majors have attempted this task. With candid reflection on lessons learned, contributing authors describe successes and failures in establishing these programs and suggest what might be next for the field. The book is essential reading for anyone concerned with community engagement’s future in the academy.

Education and Social Change: Connecting Local and Global Perspectives, edited by Geoffrey Elliott, Chahid Fournal, and Sally Issler (Continuum 2012, $55 paperback)
American readers interested in education’s role in effecting social change across globally interdependent contexts will find much that resonates in this broad-ranging volume on educational policy and practice throughout the world. Drawing examples primarily from the United Kingdom, with chapters additionally focused on locations in Asia, Australia, Africa, and continental Europe, the book illustrates the complexity of educational reform that aims to prepare students for citizenship and global engagement while also upholding principles of access and equity. An ambitious attempt to engage with a critical topic, the volume offers comparative perspectives to readers raising similar questions in American contexts.

NEW FROM AAC&U: Making Progress? What We Know About the Achievement of Liberal Education Outcomes by Ashley Finley (AAC&U 2012, $15 Member/$25 Nonmember)
Written by AAC&U’s senior director of assessment and research, this comprehensive report draws from recent national survey data to paint a hopeful but sobering picture of the state of liberal learning on college campuses. With data focused on outcomes related to global learning, civic engagement, and intercultural competence, the report points to the need to assess and improve learning outcomes across a range of areas, including those broadly related to students’ personal and social responsibility. It also reinforces that these personal and social responsibility outcomes are critical components of liberal education.
Resources

Civic Institutional Matrix
The national report A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy’s Future includes a Civic Institutional Matrix designed to help campuses evaluate their civic work by examining its status across a range of critical domains. The matrix encourages practitioners to assess those domains across four specific dimensions: civic ethos, civic literacy, civic inquiry, and civic action. To download the matrix, visit http://www.aacu.org/resources/civicengagement/index.cfm.

AACC Service Learning Resources
The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) offers several resources on its website to assist institutions with implementing service-learning experiences in the college curriculum. Available publications include the research brief “Improving Student Learning Outcomes with Service Learning.” To download this and other resources, visit http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Resources/aaccprograms/horizons/Pages/publications.aspx.

Anchor Institutions Task Force
The Anchor Institutions Task Force is a membership organization focused on developing mutually beneficial partnerships between communities and the higher education institutions that serve as anchors within them. Led by the University of Pennsylvania, the task force invites membership from individuals who agree with its principles. For more information or to join, visit http://www.margainc.com/initiatives/aitf/.

Opportunities

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS: AAC&U Summer Institutes
AAC&U summer institutes are designed to facilitate collaboration over various aspects of undergraduate learning. Teams of faculty and administrators are invited to apply to one of three annual institutes, focused respectively on general education and assessment, high-impact practices and student success, and integrative learning and the departments. AAC&U’s Project Kaleidoscope also hosts a summer institute for early and mid-career STEM faculty. For application information, visit www.aacu.org/meetings/SummerInstitutes.cfm.

CALL FOR PROPOSALS: Global Learning in College
AAC&U invites session proposals for its Network for Academic Renewal conference “Global Learning in College: Asking Big Questions, Engaging Urgent Challenges,” to be held October 3–5, 2013, in Providence, Rhode Island. To learn more about the call for proposals, visit www.aacu.org/meetings.

CALL FOR PROPOSALS: Bringing Theory to Practice Grants
Bringing Theory to Practice (BTtoP), an independent project in partnership with AAC&U, invites proposals from schools hoping to develop seminars or programs focused on engaged learning, civic engagement and development, and the psychosocial well-being of college students. Grants of up to $1,000 are available to support seminars in the campus community, and grants of up to $10,000 are available to fund programs related to BTtoP’s objectives. Applications are due March 15. To learn more, visit www.aacu.org/bringing_theory/.

AAC&U and the Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Action Network
As part of its commitment to preparing all students for civic, ethical, and social responsibility in US and global contexts, and building on the momentum generated by the 2012 White House release of the report A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy’s Future, AAC&U has formed the Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (CLDE) Action Network. Coordinated by Caryn McTighe Musil, AAC&U Senior Fellow and Director of Civic Learning and Democracy initiatives, the network includes thirteen leading civic learning organizations that are committed to making civic inquiry and engagement expected rather than elective for all college students. Diversity & Democracy regularly features research and exemplary practices developed and advanced by these partner organizations and their members:

- American Association of State Colleges and Universities
- Anchor Institutions Task Force (AITF)
- Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U)
- The Bonner Foundation
- Bringing Theory to Practice (BTtoP)
- Campus Compact
- Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE)
- The Democracy Commitment
- Imagining America
- The Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC)
- Kettering Foundation
- NASPA: Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education
- New England Resource Center for Higher Education (NERCHE)
About Diversity & Democracy

Diversity & Democracy supports higher education faculty and leaders as they design and implement programs that advance civic learning and democratic engagement, global learning, and engagement with diversity to prepare students for socially responsible action in today’s interdependent but unequal world. According to AAC&U’s Statement on Liberal Learning, “By its nature… liberal learning is global and pluralistic. It embraces the diversity of ideas and experiences that characterize the social, natural, and intellectual world. To acknowledge such diversity in all its forms is both an intellectual commitment and a social responsibility, for nothing less will equip us to understand our world and to pursue fruitful lives.” Diversity & Democracy features evidence, research, and exemplary practices to assist practitioners in creating learning opportunities that realize this vision.

About AAC&U

AAC&U is the leading national association concerned with the quality, vitality, and public standing of undergraduate liberal education. Its members are committed to extending the advantages of a liberal education to all students, regardless of academic specialization or intended career. Founded in 1915, AAC&U now comprises more than 1,250 member institutions—including accredited public and private colleges, community colleges, and universities of every type and size. AAC&U functions as a catalyst and facilitator, forging links among presidents, administrators, and faculty members who are engaged in institutional and curricular planning. Information about AAC&U membership, programs, and publications can be found at www.aacu.org.

AAC&U Membership 2012

(1,287 members)

- MASTERS 31%
- BACCALAUREATE 25%
- ASSOCIATES 12%
- RES & DOC 16%
- OTHER* 16%

*specialized schools, state systems and agencies, and international affiliates