CHAPTER 11

THE SCHOLARSHIP OF ENGAGEMENT

A Reason to Cross the Ivory Tower's Moat

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You can't fix education until you fix the community.
education is not a building, but a lifestyle and an environment

—Robert John Meehan

INTRODUCTION

Given the longstanding role and importance of higher education in society, it is worth reflecting on Boyer's (1990) work describing the academic yet practical relationship between scholarship and community; which the author described as the scholarship of engagement. Interestingly, although written over a decade ago, the work is set in the context of times in which the author describes profound changes stirring the nation and the world.
It is fair to say that today, we also find ourselves amidst profound changes in the nation and the world. Given the impressive technological advances, unprecedented international competition, and influences of globalization on modern society, it may even be fair to say that a decade from now other scholars will reflect on this notion and scoff at the idea that we are experiencing as much change as we currently think we are experiencing. In fact, it may serve us well to ascribe to the old adage and accept that the only thing constant is change.

Parallel to these changing times, the role of higher education is constantly challenged, questioned, and debated. These questions arise mostly due to financial crises, restrictive budgets, and divergent political agendas, which ultimately have reduced funding to public institutions of higher education. In addition to reduction in funding for higher education institutions, the structure of higher education financing is changing, much in part because of the increasing number of private institutions in society (Robinson, Rice, Stoddard, & Alfred, 2013) and because of the call for performance-based funding.

According to Alexander (2000), performance-based funding for higher education substantially increased in the 1990s and this was particularly true among Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) nations (Burke & Serban, 1997; El-Khawas & Massey, 1996; Jongbloed & Koelman, 1996). In addition, as Jongbloed & Vossensteyn (2001) noted, there is an overall increase in performance-based funding in higher education institutions internationally. Recent political discourse in the United States also suggests higher education institutions should be funded according to performance outputs. As the modes of funding and the face of higher education change, the relationship between higher education institutions and society is also changing.

Undoubtedly, higher education and society are interdependent, and while this is not new, the context of today’s society results in increasing demands and expectations of higher educational institutions and their graduates. These dynamics are placing pressure on institutions of higher education to be more effective in several areas including:

- Fulfilling a social contract as partner in the development of American communities (Robinson, Metower, Byrd, Louis, & Bonner, 2012).
- Becoming more responsive to national economic needs and new governmental demands for increased performance (Alexander, 2000).
- Removing barriers that impede low-income adults from participating in higher education (Hansman, 2010), especially to support learning for economic self-sufficiency (Alfred, 2010).
- Strengthening the bonds between the university and communities to address contemporary problems (Bok, 1990).
The purpose of this chapter is to examine the scholarship of engagement; that is, to examine practical ways in which colleges and universities can develop, strengthen, and sustain mutually beneficial relationships in their local, national, and even global communities, all with the intent of fulfilling their missions and meeting the needs of these communities.

An examination of these increasing demands and expectations of higher education institutions brings their roles and their missions squarely into question. In addition, it demands that traditional measures of success undergo examination and possible recalibration, especially while considering that the societies in which these institutions function are constantly changing. Education, and higher education in particular, continue to be influenced by global trends (Robinson, Rice, Stoddart, & Alfred, 2013) and despite these trends higher education provides substantial benefits to individuals, communities, and society in general.

According to a College Board report by Baum and Payea (2005), we tend to think of higher education in terms of personal gain; yet, the broader societal benefits (both direct and indirect) of the investment in higher education are central to the vitality of a nation, particularly through human capital development. Further, Baum and Payea (2005) report that higher education results in the following benefits to societies:

- Higher levels of education correspond to lower levels of unemployment and poverty; so, in addition to contributing more to tax revenues than others do, adults with higher levels of education are less likely to depend on social safety-net programs, generating decreased demand on public budgets.
- College graduates have lower smoking rates, more positive perceptions of personal health, and lower incarceration rates than individuals who have not graduated from college.
- Higher levels of education are correlated with higher levels of civic participation, including volunteer work, voting, and blood donation.

These benefits have wide implications for the vitality and success of individuals, communities, and nations.

Society continues to place demands on higher education institutions and this chapter seeks to outline how some of these demands can be met through a keen focus on the scholarship of engagement. This means there is a need for a new model on how higher education institutions can lead economic development efforts, drive innovation, increase knowledge transfer, and harness community engagement while performing the traditional educational functions.
Conceptualizing Engagement and Engaged Scholarship

Hall (2013) describes the relationship between higher education and community-based research, engaged scholarship, as a dance; a dance would suggest movement and rhythm. While this description aptly fits the Canadian context, which Hall describes, it is also well suited to describe an American context. The dance here described is typically conceived as a rhythmical set of movements between two dancers—the community and the institution by virtue of the scholar. Importantly, Boyer (1990) cautions that the faculty member is described as an individual but is a mere representative of the larger unit and as such is unable to effectively maneuver through this dance in isolation.

The movements of the dance, in practical terms, relate to the relationships that emerge and develop from a shared purpose. Boyer (1990) aptly describes this purpose as a need for “scholars who not only skillfully explore the frontiers of knowledge, but also integrate ideas, connect thought to action, and inspire students…[to] see beyond themselves and better understand the interdependent nature of our world” (p. 77). In pursuing the dance metaphor, we can envision engagement and engaged scholarship as an intricate network, which coordinates collaboration across disciplines, dedicated to the service of the academy and the wider society, particularly as we seek to promote global citizenship in our students.

In the scholarship of engagement, there is a call for a “shared vision of intellectual and social possibilities” (Boyer, 1990, p. 80) and for scholars to “think about the usefulness of knowledge to reflect on the social consequences of their work, and in so doing gain understanding of how their own study relates to the world beyond campus” (p. 69). Figure 11.1 illustrates the scholarship of engagement framework. It provides a graphic representation of the main elements—outreach, partnerships, and working towards a shared purpose, and the end results that provide mutual benefit to the immediate community and possibly wider society.

Engagement suggests outreach beyond the boundaries of the institution and while framed by a broad intellectual foundation, it suggests practicality and relevance for community members and their needs. Nevertheless, the scholarship of engagement retains systematic processes and academic rigor, even in its outreach. Interestingly, the scholarship of engagement is blossoming as a field of practice and academic research. In fact, there are at least two major academic peer-reviewed journals dedicated to this work. The Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement (JHEOE) (n.d.) describes its purpose and goals this way:

The mission of the JHEOE is to serve as the premier peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary journal to advance theory and practice related to all forms of outreach and engagement between higher education institutions and communities. This
includes highlighting innovative endeavors; critically examining emerging issues, trends, challenges, and opportunities; and reporting on studies of impact in the areas of public service, outreach, engagement, extension, engaged research, community-based research, community-based participatory research, action research, public scholarship, service-learning, and community service. (para. 1)

The *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship* (JCES), which began in 2008, describes its purpose as a forum through which:

Faculty, staff, students, and community partners disseminate scholarly works. JCES integrates teaching, research, and community engagement in all disciplines and addresses critical problems identified through a community-participatory process.

Nonetheless, Mullins (2011) suggests that a key challenge that scholars in this field face is establishing what constitutes community engagement.

Colbeck and Michael (2006) in arguing for public scholarship as a model of academic work that integrates Boyer’s (1990) domains, cite Yapa’s (2006) definition of public scholarship. Yapa posits that public scholarship refers to:

scholarly activity generating new knowledge through academic reflection on issues of community engagement. It integrates research, teaching, and service. It does not assume that useful knowledge simply flows outward from the university to the larger community. It recognizes that new knowledge is created in its application in the field, and therefore benefits the teaching and research mission of the university. (p. 73)

Sandmann (2008) explains that the scholarship of engagement has changed over the years and is “becoming differentiated into a multifaceted field. For
example, this term may refer to outreach, public service, civic engagement, community engagement, participatory action research, and even community development” (p. 92). For purposes of this chapter, as highlighted earlier, scholarship of engagement is understood in terms of Boyer’s (1990) position as one of the main priorities of the professoriate with the expansion to include the goal of global citizenship for faculty and students alike.

This figure (Figure 11.1) is a graphic representation of the Scholarship of Engagement as framed by Boyer (1990) and adapted to focus on the results of the Scholarship of Engagement in terms of economic and social development, innovation, knowledge transfer, and global citizenship.

Global Citizenship

Engaged scholarship, or public scholarship, engages faculty members, students, and community members to work together toward a shared purpose. This shared purpose relates to outreach. Outreach is a mission-related concept that connects the resources of the higher education institution to audiences external to the institution (Lynott, 1995). It goes beyond the traditional ivory tower halls, crosses the moat and reaches into the community. This work usually entails examining, defining, and addressing real-world issues and problems in all their complexity. Further, the process of addressing these usually requires even greater collaboration between the university and the community. In our complex, and interdependent world, it is essential that faculty help prepare students for global citizenship. One way to develop students’ awareness and understanding of the world, beyond the boundaries of their institutions of learning, is through the exposure of community engagement scholarship.

By engaging in scholarship across university, national, and cultural borders, students and faculty can engage in quasi-experimental learning experiences that can result in the following benefits:

- Global empathy and interest (Bachen, Hernandez-Ramos, & Raphael, 2012)
- Respect and understanding of socially and politically oppressed peoples (Martin, Smolen, Oswald, & Milam, 2012)
- Pro-environmental behavior/Environmentally responsible consumer behaviors (Dobson, 2003)
- Transformational learning experiences (Mezirow, 2000) in which “something profound happens during the first international encounter” (McKeown, 2009, p. 6)
- Nurturing of other values and character dispositions such as sympathy, care, and compassion for others (Dobson, 2003)
At the heart of global citizenship is this notion of awareness and looking beyond old barriers that have separated peoples, cultures, and ways of life.

PRACTICAL APPROACHES TO THE SCHOLARSHIP OF ENGAGEMENT

This chapter has outlined the importance of the role of higher education in communities and to society as a whole, especially given the current context of contemporary society. It also discussed the concept of engagement in terms of the interaction between the institution of higher education in partnership with the communities in which they operate and beyond. In more practical terms, it also illustrated how the scholarship of engagement has positive implications for the university and community in terms of knowledge production and transfer, innovation, social and economic development, and in terms of cultivating global citizenship in our students and faculty. With a specific focus on global citizenship, the chapter also highlights the benefits of global citizenship as an ideal that can be connected to the overall mission of higher education institutions.

This section of the chapter is dedicated to outlining practical approaches to the scholarship of engagement. It also provides a brief summary of an engagement project at Louisiana State University that was modeled after the Operation Cease Fire program that has been met with success at violence prevention in a number of urban cities across the United States.

According to Tarrant (2010), “most institutions of higher education in the United States acknowledge that the future of the workforce of America depends on a citizenry that is sensitive to, and aware of global issues... [since] one in every six domestic jobs [is tied to international trade]” (p. 433). As such, there are various approaches to develop a culture of engaged scholarship (Dana & Emilovich, 2004) and to promote opportunities for students to become internationally competent.

There are various approaches that faculty can take to frame their work in terms of the scholarship of engagement. Examples include: faculty-led international programs; interdisciplinary, community-based participatory research; study abroad; and service-learning projects.

In these kinds of projects, there are several stakeholders whose combined efforts work towards building positive, long-term, mutually committed relationships. These efforts demand equitable partnerships, cultural humility and open communication for them to be successful. Service learning opportunities, for example, provide a form of experiential education that combines classroom instruction with meaningful community service. According to Robinson (2009), service learning is a practical exercise as it involves the application of knowledge from the traditional classroom towards
addressing or responding to community needs. The projects that are designed and implemented can vary by discipline and impact. One major and successful and meaningful community engagement project, while not focused on global citizenship, has enjoyed much success in the community.

**Baton Rouge Area Violence Elimination (BRAVE)**

The Baton Rouge Area Violence Elimination (BRAVE) initiative is a violence prevention program, which epitomizes success in community and university partnerships—the scholarship of engagement. The Initiative grew from a partnership between faculty members and the city's District Attorney who wrote a grant to target juvenile gun violence. The School of Social Work's Office of Social Research and Development (OSSRD) worked with the Mayor and District Attorney to organize business, community, and religious leaders for data collection, grant writing, and submission.

In their work to provide expertise and strategic data, social work faculty conduct process and outcome evaluations, train service providers and law enforcement personnel, and conduct qualitative interviews and related research. LSU faculty from sociology, geography and anthropology, human resource education and workforce development, and mass communication, analyze crime data, develop maps, conduct trend analysis, and assist in community awareness.

Based on the partnerships with these local community groups (business, faith-based groups, health and education services; independent law enforcement (state, city, and sheriff/parish) groups a broad approach to target Type 1 violent crimes has seen a reduction in homicide in the target area by some 45%. These results are impressive and show that collaboration across disciplines between higher education institutions and local communities can solve real world problems that have significant implications for community safety.

**CONCLUSION**

Faculty, even those who recognize the value of engaged scholarship, or even those who work in a culture of engaged scholarship (Dana & Emihovich, 2004) still struggle with a holistic approach to engaged scholarship. This is ultimately because of difficulties in framing their work in ways that still meet the needs for the tenure and promotion process. When a faculty member decides to develop an agenda of work that embraces the scholarship of engagement it is important to bear the measures of success by which performance will be judged. This means framing the engaged scholarship in a way that meets all the requirements of the tenure and promotion process.
as well as meeting more intrinsic motivations for scholars who are inspired to make a difference rather than simply meet traditional productivity goals.

As a scholar keenly interested in issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion and a social justice focused research agenda, the scholarship of engagement is particularly appealing. Framing this professoriate priority in this way helps the institution to meet the traditional education roles of developing knowledge and skills for our students in terms of making them ready for the current workplace, but also helps to develop global citizenship and prepares them for the future. This model does not take away from the thrust to lead economic development nor does it take away from the demands for academic rigor. On the contrary, this model — scholarship of engagement — frames academic work in practical terms and taps into the expertise that exists outside of the academy. It is bolstered by teaching and research in communities and helps higher education institutions recommit to their societal contract of providing quality educational opportunities to produce knowledge and to build academic and civic competence and to prepare students for productive global citizenship while promoting reciprocal relationships with institutions and the wider community.

REFERENCES


