

From the Desk of the Guest Editors

Eric Mlyn and Amanda Moore McBride

In April 2011, the Center for Social Development and the Gephardt Institute for Public Service at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, and DukeEngage of Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, convened a symposium at Washington University in St. Louis on international service and higher education in partnership with the Brookings Institution (a nonprofit organization that conducts research on policy issues), the Building Bridges Coalition (a consortium of organizations working to encourage international volunteering), and Service World (an agenda to expand international volunteer opportunities). The symposium reviewed the history and purposes of international service in higher education, focusing on effective service models with attention to scalability, cost-effectiveness, and impact. The symposium coincided with the 50th anniversary of the Peace Corps, an independent United States government agency that supports international volunteering by U.S. citizens, which many college and university campuses celebrated in 2011. The challenge before the assembled practitioners and scholars was to respond to the growing thirst of students to move beyond the traditional study abroad paradigm and to work toward institutionalizing international service opportunities that benefit students and the communities that they serve.

We know that the number of students from the United States involved in civic engagement abroad is growing every year. This is part of two broader trends. The first is the increased globalization of U.S. higher education; in fact, it would be fair to say that international service is just one small part of this broader trend in which U.S. universities are opening satellite campuses in Asia and the Middle East, creating partnerships and collaborations with institutions across the globe, and sending more and more students around the world while simultaneously enrolling increasing numbers of international students in U.S. institutions. The second is the increased number of U.S. citizens who are volunteering abroad through governmental, faith-based, or volunteer-sending organization programs. These two trends together serve to propel the field of international service and underscore its importance.

Conference participants, who represented a wide range of U.S. institutions of higher education and volunteer-sending organizations, learned at the symposium that international service in higher

education takes many forms and is found across the wide range of institutions that make up the diverse landscape of U.S. higher education. International service spans curricular and co-curricular opportunities. Public universities, private universities, research universities, liberal arts colleges, and community colleges are all increasingly offering their students opportunities to participate in international service. Students may serve abroad through internships, individual service trips, or alternative break group projects. Students may also participate in credit-bearing international service-learning programs. International service is not discipline specific; opportunities can be found in technical and non-technical areas and programs, from the humanities to schools of engineering, from the arts to the sciences.

The issues that international service as a field of study confronts in the midst of this dynamic and exciting environment both internal and external to higher education have important implications for practice, policy, and research. And though colleges and universities articulate the practice and policies of, as well as research on, international service differently based in part on their unique roles and histories, all institutional types endeavor to foster cognitive and social development, global citizenship, critical thinking, and ethical grounding in their students through international service experiences.

This thematic issue of the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* highlights six important contributions to the symposium's topic and to the growing body of literature about international service. In a piece that frames this volume and the field, Margaret Sherraden of the University of Missouri–St. Louis, Benjamin J. Lough of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and Amy Bopp of the University of Missouri–St. Louis explore research from a variety of fields. They propose a framework for inquiry on international service programs, paying special attention to the program and institutional characteristics that might account for different types and degrees of program outcomes. Robbin Crabtree of Fairfield University offers an honest reflection on both the positive and negative impacts of international service on host countries. She poses questions inspired by scenarios from a variety of past international service-learning projects, focusing on an exploration of the outcomes—intended and unintended, positive and negative—for the communities that host U.S. student teams. Echoing the seminal warnings offered by Ivan Illich in *To Hell with Good Intentions*, Crabtree goes the extra step by offering a model to inform project design, implementation, and evaluation.

Donald Rubin and Paul Matthews of the University of Georgia remind readers that they do not have to reinvent the wheel in order to gather meaningful and useful data on student learning outcomes. Recent large-scale projects—including the Georgia Learning Outcomes of Students Studying Abroad Research Initiative (GLOSSARI)—offer precedent upon which international service-learning assessment programs may draw. A team of practitioners and scholars, including Jill Piacitelli of Break Away (a national organization that promotes Alternative Spring Breaks), Molly Barwick of Indiana University, Elizabeth Doerr of the University of Maryland, Melody Porter of the College of William and Mary, and Shoshanna Sumka of American University, offer guidelines for short-term service trips that emerge from the goodwill of students and institutions to respond to crises and natural disasters. From Providence College, Nuria Alonso García and Nicholas V. Longo offer a bold argument to reframe international service-learning as global service-learning, to connect the domestic to the international, and to integrate this pedagogy across the curriculum.

To conclude this issue, Kevin Quigley, president of the National Peace Corps Association and adjunct faculty member at the School of Public and International Affairs at George Mason University, offers provocative thoughts on how to realize something that was a vision over 50 years ago—to enhance the relationship between this iconic federal governmental program and the institutions that are featured in this volume.

We view the symposium and this issue of the *Journal* as small steps toward the goal of building this field of study with rigorous research and assessment. To continue building, a second symposium on this topic will be held at Northwestern University in October 2013. The symposium will address identified gaps in the field, advance models that maximize impacts for international service partners, and identify pedagogies most appropriate for the field of international service. While we watch with great excitement as this field comes of age, we also will seek to work with entities like the Consortium on Financing Higher Education (COFHE), the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), and the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) to invest in research that will advance the goals of international service and higher education.

Finally, we should never underestimate the important contribution that international service makes to citizen diplomacy across the globe. As relations between countries become increasingly militarized and the United States extracts itself from two bloody

and costly wars, bringing the wisdom, energy, and goodwill of U.S. college and university students to those around the globe who may assume that all U.S. citizens carry guns is another benefit of the growth of international service as a field of study. We hope that in a small way this thematic issue contributes to the advancement of the field.

With warmest regards,

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