

Beere, C. A., Votruba, J. C., & Wells, G. W. (2011). *Becoming an Engaged Campus: A Practical Guide to Institutionalizing Public Engagement*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

### Review by Craig D. Weidemann

**B**ecoming an Engaged Campus is a superb practical guidebook for higher education leaders serious about advancing engaged scholarship throughout their institution. Displaying their collective, profound understanding of the myriad benefits and challenges inherent in creating an engaged institution, the authors provide a “how-to” book, taking the reader step-by-step through a change strategy called an “alignment process.” Adopted from Collins and Porras’ (1994) well-regarded business strategy book, *Built to Last*, this strategy becomes the core thesis of the importance of a holistic, university-wide commitment to becoming an engaged campus.

In Chapter 1, the book provides an understanding of the context for public engagement and outreach. This chapter chronicles higher education’s migration from an early focus on teaching, undergraduate education, and the liberal arts to the emulation of the German research model and the expansion of federal funding for research and the land-grant movement in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and through the dramatic growth of federal government investment in research and education after World War II. The authors highlight the impact of Ernest Boyer’s seminal work, *Scholarship Reconsidered* (1990), which affirmed higher education’s role as a public good, extolled the four forms of scholarship—discovery, teaching, integration, and application (later called engagement)—and advanced campuses to consider the merits of engaged scholarship. The authors encourage campuses to clarify the lexicon defining their engaged work to ensure alignment with campus mission and priorities. The chapter concludes by sharing the many factors driving engagement and its broad benefits to various internal and external audiences, benefits that are institutionally more important than ever as the value of higher education is being challenged on so many fronts.

Chapter 2 lays the foundation for the alignment process and emphasizes the deep challenges of creating a truly engaged campus. The alignment or assessment process is implemented using a grid with four organizational levels and 16 organizational dimensions. This practical framing of the process suggests that an institution first consider the desired state for being truly engaged, and then evaluate elements currently in place. The authors suggest a

committee with broad institutional representation of key leaders, without community representation, to evaluate all parts of the grid and develop a strategy to address each cell.

The authors' experiences indicate that community members are not interested in how the university aligns its processes for engagement purposes. However, committee membership must include well-respected campus thought-leaders to increase the likelihood that the institution will embrace the subsequent assessment. This thorough process is followed by appointment of a governing board to advance and monitor implementation. Although no research affirms the length of the implementation process, research indicates that comparable strategies to implement student engagement took between 5 and 8 years. The grid provides a well-thought-out structure; however, as the authors comment, the process must be customized to reflect the culture and nuances of the institution. As with so many institutional initiatives, rich dialogue occurs during the process and in developing the product. Engaged scholarship often is embraced by individual faculty members with a deep commitment to community-based research or service-learning, but with little impact on engagement for the institution or its faculty as a whole. The proposed committee and processes are intended to leverage and expand these key faculty members' work.

Chapter 3 emphasizes the importance of institutional foundational elements, beginning with an affirmation of engagement in the institution's core mission, vision statement, and values. These three elements must be emphasized in the institutional strategic plan, which must embrace external stakeholders' input. A salient point is made about funding for engagement: Engagement work is not a profit center for the institution, although it can play a role in increasing public financing, grants, and philanthropy. The authors make the case that engagement initiatives must not be subject to unfair cuts when budget challenges arise. They contend that engagement must be a sustained university priority, and not the first item reduced when budgets are tight. Finally, not only should the strategic planning process include external stakeholders, but the campus physical plant must be welcoming and open to external constituencies.

Chapter 4 underscores the key role of campus leaders as translators between the community and the institution. The commitment of the institutional president is imperative for the institution to truly benefit from the alignment process. From my perspective, it is the most significant issue in creating an engaged institution. The case study in the book, Northern Kentucky University, which studiously implemented the process and is benchmarked as a standard

of an engaged institution, greatly benefited from the leadership of President Votruba, one of the authors. The book makes the key point that the entire academic leadership team must proactively support faculty's engaged scholarship work. Internal leadership, especially by the chief academic officer, must ensure that the appropriate funding and rewards are in place to support the faculty. Also, the chief academic officer, deans, and department heads all must balance both the engaged and traditional scholarship by the faculty, an especially difficult issue at research institutions where traditional research receives particular emphasis. The challenge, the authors note, is integrating public engagement by embedding it in the teaching, research, and service missions of the institution. Finally, it is critical that all academic leaders espouse the perspective that communities are not laboratories or subjects for academic research, but rather are true partners in the research process.

Chapter 5 stresses the importance of aligning the institutional organizational structure to advance the engagement enterprise. The book makes a strong case for creating a senior level administrator, in the chief academic officer's office, to serve as the coordinating advocate for engaged scholarship. This position provides both substantive and symbolic leadership, making a statement that engagement is a key leadership priority. The authors advise against burdening the chief engagement officer with line management of offices, centers, or units with engagement initiatives. Clearly, if engagement is to permeate the institution, the work must be likewise embedded in the individual units throughout the university. The authors do suggest the responsibility for service-learning may be a line responsibility, but this function must report to the chief academic officer's office. Finally, the authors point out the merits of a coordinating council representing the various university leaders with oversight of engagement initiatives (e.g., service-learning, centers with community-based research, multidisciplinary initiatives focusing on key societal issues). The authors also indicate the importance of key external stakeholder representation on university boards, especially those focusing on strategic social, civic, and economic issues. Again, they emphasize that the appropriate organizational structure to advance engagement must reflect the unique history, challenges, institutional type (i.e., comprehensive, research), and culture of an institution.

The actual engagement work is performed predominantly through the efforts of faculty members and their engaged scholarship. However, in Chapter 6, which focuses on alignment of faculty and staff, it is noted that faculty do not naturally gravitate toward engagement work. Rightly or wrongly, it is widely believed that

engagement work significantly hinders progress toward tenure. As the book points out, engaged scholarship is messy, requiring a real orientation toward collaboration with faculty members from other disciplines, and with various community members and organizations. This is challenging for faculty members trained to work in solitary research endeavors, and not accustomed to variants of the truth in discovery. Many faculty members simply are not a good match for engaged scholarship work. The powerful forces of promotion and tenure, and not clearly understanding or recognizing the academic quality and merit of engaged scholarship, are also major deterrents to faculty participation, especially for early career faculty.

This book, however, provides solid recommendations to address the issues that negatively impact faculty members interested in pursuing an engagement agenda. Specifically, the authors posit the importance of highlighting faculty engaged work during recruiting and hiring, and in the orientation of new faculty. Other requisite elements include genuinely taking workload into consideration, matching programs with faculty skills and interests, and developing “faculty fellows” to advance engagement work and mentor new faculty. Finally, maintaining the focus on the importance of alignment, the senior leadership must visibly communicate its support for faculty members conducting engaged scholarship work, and provide incentives and celebrations to reward their participation. The chapter concludes by acknowledging what I see as the most significant roadblocks to faculty engaged work—the pressures of disciplinary expectations, graduate faculty ranking, and the academic department promotion and tenure committee. The authors clearly do not advocate for participation of the entire faculty corps in engaged scholarship; however, the previously mentioned barriers are significant and impede those faculty members with keen interest in engaging external communities in their scholarship.

The critical importance of the promotion and tenure process and its relationship to recognizing faculty engaged scholarship warranted a full chapter. The authors stress the slow, requisite process to change what is valued in promotion procedures; however, they argue that three goals must be addressed:

- (a) create a system that recognizes and rewards behavior that advances each institution’s mission dimensions;
- (b) ensure that the RPT [reappointment, promotion, and tenure] guidelines are fair and promote quality work;
- (c) develop guidelines that clarify what work is acceptable within each of the mission dimensions, the criteria by

which it will be evaluated, what constitutes acceptable documentation, and the process by which the documentation will be evaluated. (p. 126)

Chapters 6 and 7 considerably advance the thinking about many critical academic issues surrounding faculty members' engaged work across all three dimensions: engaged scholarship, engaged teaching, and engaged service.

Chapter 8 highlights the expanding focus on student engagement, especially service-learning and community-based research. Although service-learning has traditionally been content- or discipline-based, the authors touch upon the emerging emphasis on civic learning that focuses on social change, social justice, and civic agency. The key to all curricular student engagement is academic rigor and planning. The book provides a number of references to help institutions establish a student engagement initiative, and articulates the components for an effective program. The authors contend that the most challenging limitations to building a student engagement program are the time demands it places on faculty members, students, and community members. In addition, they share the concern that communities must be recognized as equal partners in community-based research, not merely subjects for funded experiments. Like all types of engaged scholarship, providing academically rigorous learning experiences for students in service-learning and community-based research requires strong preparation, deep faculty involvement to integrate the learning experience into coursework, and engaged participation from community partners.

Chapter 9 considers the importance of measurement, one of the most challenging aspects of engaged scholarship. The authors add a unique lens to the measurement issue by emphasizing the importance and complexity of surveying many elements regarding the overall campus climate to support engaged scholarship. However, the really critical issue of measuring the impact on students, curricula, and communities is not significantly addressed in this chapter and merits much more consideration. As many public institutions face increased expectations from legislators and taxpayers to justify the public good of higher education, being able to measure and show impact will be one of the most salient engaged scholarship challenges.

The next three chapters focus on alignment of communication, community, and public policy. The emphasis on communication stresses the importance of internal alignment with purveying an institution's engagement work. On a macro level, sharing an

institution's engagement work can play an important role in making the case for public funding; at the micro level, promoting service-learning and community-based research opportunities for potential students can advance undergraduate admissions efforts as more students seek real world experiences. The chapter on aligning with community ably outlines a process for maximizing community-university partnerships. The authors' understanding of the complexities and inherent challenges of the process is reflected in their well-articulated advice on setting the foundation for and building effective partnerships. The final chapter on alignment covers the tremendous opportunity for higher education to support state-wide agendas that can impact change, and provides concrete examples. The concluding chapter emphasizes the importance of not being reactive to a drastically changing landscape and, instead, being proactive in developing a solid change process to advance engagement in higher education institutions.

Again, this is an outstanding "how-to" book on building an engaged institution. The authors speak from experience, offer a thoughtful planning alignment or assessment matrix, and provide important references. I strongly suggest campus leaders spend time with this book as they build, and work to maintain, an institutional engaged scholarship initiative.

## References

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## About the Reviewer

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