Welch, M. (2016). *Engaging higher education: Purpose, platforms, and programs for community engagement.* Sterling, VA: Stylus. 312 pp.

Review by Lisa Townson

*T*he world is facing increasingly complex challenges, such as climate change, global food security, and social equality. Higher education plays a key role in addressing these, but a diversity of thought, experiences, and knowledge, such as that found when we engage with community partners, will be essential to resolving the most compelling questions. Community engagement efforts have been part of higher education for close to 100 years (Cooperative Extension began in 1914), and the number of campus centers for community engagement began to increase in the early 1980s. However, institutionalizing community engagement and providing high quality support to faculty and students engaged with community partners remains a challenge. In a climate of shrinking public support for higher education, some may question why a university or college should focus on community engagement at all. I would argue that it is more important than ever for higher education to engage fully with off-campus partners to address the most critical and complex issues of our time. Even so, faculty often do not have the skills and resources, students do not have mentors, and community members are puzzled about how to approach higher education to address their needs.

Administrators and leaders in higher education wrestle with ways to support faculty and students in their efforts to work closely with external partners, but most institutions have figured out how to do this on their own. Given that each institution has its own culture, faculty needs, and existing partnerships, best practices in supporting community engagement efforts have been difficult to identify.

In his book *Engaging Higher Education: Purpose, Platforms, and Programs for Community Engagement*, Marshall Welch offers higher education a practical guide to developing and implementing support for community engagement on college campuses. His recommendations are based on theory and on research into successful campus centers and organizations that have collected and presented data on service-learning, civic engagement, engaged scholarship, and best practices for engagement.

The content of this volume emerged from a national study on the infrastructure of campus centers for engagement on campuses that were part of the 361 Carnegie-classified community-engaged institutions. With such a rich set of data about community-engaged

practices, officials from colleges and universities that responded wanted to learn the collective results, in order to use what other institutions were doing well to improve their own practices. It is a well-researched handbook for those already running centers and for institutions that would like to start them, as well as for aspiring engaged scholars who want to improve their own practice. Influenced by theory (although not steeped in it), the volume provides a conceptual framework for why and how community engagement—and, in particular, service-learning—has evolved and continues to serve society.

The book draws institutional data primarily from surveys of more than 1,100 Campus Compact members and responses to the 361 Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement institutional applications, resulting in a greater focus on service-learning than on engaged scholarship. Organized into three parts—the purpose (why), the platforms (how), and the programs (what) of community engagement in higher education—this volume includes summaries of faculty development needs, types of staffing in campus centers for engagement, and appendices of readiness inventories and frameworks for assessment.

The purpose of community engagement is described in detail. Welch includes a brief review of events in the history of higher education that, he argues, led to today's understanding of and appreciation for engagement. An entire chapter is devoted to the definition of community engagement. It includes a comprehensive conceptual discussion of community engagement in higher education, from Boyer to more contemporary scholars, like Saltmarsh, Boyte, and Ward. One of my few criticisms of the book stems from the challenges to institutionalizing engaged scholarship caused by confusion about vocabulary. Although it is likely unintentional, the prominence of the words *community engagement* in the title and the book's focus on service-learning and engaged pedagogy may further muddle understandings by promoting the belief that student involvement is a necessary component of all forms of community engagement.

Welch does, however, acknowledge that there are many different definitions for community engagement and provides a useful overview of the different approaches to engagement. Although the entire book is worth reading, the chapter titled "What Is Engagement?" would be a wonderful foundational reading for graduate students or anyone just entering the field of engaged scholarship.

The author describes the subtle differences between civic, community, and democratic engagement and covers several definitions of engaged scholarship. Tying early calls from the Kellogg Commission for campuses to become engaged institutions to various campus initiatives and the current Carnegie classification for community engagement, Welch describes what it means to be an engaged campus. To summarize, these definitions include the following tenets:

- performs academic/scholarly work for public good;
- includes forms of teaching, research, and service, but always includes academic expertise and methodology that is grounded in scholarly work;
- not only draws on academic expertise, but also reflects community knowledge and expertise.

Welch pays particular attention to engaged pedagogy and epistemology, describing various forms of experiential education in comparison to community engagement. Drawing on Campus Compact data and exemplar programs, the author not only makes a clear and compelling case for engaged pedagogy in undergraduate programs, but also provides key principles and examples of high-impact practices. He also includes examples of faculty development curricula in service-learning and provides an overview of community engagement from the undergraduate student's perspective.

The section on platforms focuses on systems and infrastructure. This description of the financial, human, and facilities resources required for institutions to adequately support community engagement is well done and quite practical. I find the descriptions particularly helpful for institutions that are either building new community engagement offices/centers or reorganizing existing ones. The section is informative about what various institutions have done and offers a summary of the kinds of support that are necessary to advance engagement across service-learning and research missions. In addition to its practical descriptions, the book also explores how academic and institutional culture affect a campus's ability to institutionalize engagement—across leadership, faculty, and community members.

Shaped by purpose and platform, engagement programs are developed and implemented differently at all institutions. With sources ranging from small to large institutions, this book provides examples of program development activities, including capacity building, leadership development, recognition and celebration, resource development and sharing, and strategic planning. The

detailed description of important components is thoughtful and useful. From examples of what books and periodicals should be included in a campus engagement resource library to descriptions of quality faculty development, data-driven practices are carefully described.

Although one of the most important tenets of community-engaged scholarship is reciprocity with partners, few universities have addressed the need for preparing and training partners in various essentials of campus–community engagement: identifying potential faculty partners, understanding institutional policies such as human subjects protection and sponsored project administration, and advocating for their own needs as part of a joint project. The inclusion of training and educational resources for partners on how to work effectively with campus faculty and staff is a refreshing addition to the literature, highlighting the need for memorandum of understanding (MOU) development and assessments of relationships. However, most of the examples provided describe best practices in the context of service-learning.

Perhaps the most useful part of this book is a detailed description of campus engagement center requirements for infrastructure and resources, not just in a theoretical sense, but also in a very practical way. In addition to discussing the need for paid staff and optimal location of a physical office, the book even suggests roles and responsibilities for directors and other staff. Further, Welch provides data from the Carnegie classification applications describing all types of staffing needs for engagement centers, including administrators, advisory boards, and development staff. He presents a fairly comprehensive array of services that campus centers provide and even reports average annual operating budgets.

This book is written in very accessible language and would be helpful for institutional leaders involved in engagement activities on their campuses as well as faculty and graduate students in higher education. Written much as a guide with best practices, it describes building campus support structures for engagement, faculty development approaches, risk management, assessment, and support services. The appendices include useful tools that can be adapted and used to facilitate discussions between faculty and community partners and to assess institutional readiness for community engagement.

The volume has a clear focus on service-learning, and it offers a much more comprehensive discussion of the theory of engaged pedagogy than of engaged research/scholarship. Given the exis-

tence of a more developed literature on service-learning and pedagogy, the book would achieve a higher level of usefulness if it focused equally on engaged research/scholarship. *Research, Actionable Knowledge, and Social Change: Reclaiming Social Responsibility Through Research Partnerships (St. John, 2013)* is an example of a good reference on engaged research that provides the type of coverage missing in this volume. Similarly, organizations that are less focused on service-learning and support a wider range of community engagement, including engaged research and scholarship, are not highlighted in this volume to the same degree as service-learning organizations such as Campus Compact and the International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement (IARSLCE). For example, the Engagement Scholarship Consortium (ESC) began 18 years ago (as the National Outreach Scholarship Conference), and today its members consist of private and public colleges and universities from the United States and the rest of the world. In addition to hosting an annual conference, the ESC promotes a unified research agenda in engaged scholarship. The organization's goal is "to work collaboratively to build strong university–community partnerships anchored in the rigor of scholarship, and designed to help build community capacity" *(Engagement Scholarship Consortium, n.d., para. 1)*.

Engaging Higher Education is a wonderful and pragmatic resource that presents meticulously collected data from a wide range of institutions of higher education. This is a "how-to" manual for running a successful center focused on service-learning, though many of the recommendations and practices would benefit an office focused solely on engaged scholarship. From soup to nuts, this book addresses the human and financial resources required, practices that achieve impact, and, perhaps most critical, the theoretical basis for why these practices are necessary for success. It is a must-have resource for anyone running a college or university center for service-learning and academic leaders who want to build stronger support for these initiatives.

References

Engagement Scholarship Consortium. (n.d.) About the Engagement Scholarship Consortium. Retrieved from https://engagementscholarship.org/what-is-engagement-scholarship/about

St. John, E. P. (2013). *Research, actionable knowledge, and social change: Reclaiming social responsibility through research partnerships.* Sterling, VA: Stylus.

About the Reviewer

Lisa Townson is the Associate Director of Foundation Relations for the University of Vermont Foundation and has previously served in various roles for Cooperative Extension and engagement at the University of New Hampshire. Her research interests include disciplinary differences in faculty engaged scholarship activity and faculty development. She received her Ph.D. from the University of New Hampshire.