

Note from the Guest Editors...

This Is Engagement: A Perspective on the ESC Special Edition

We welcome you to this special edition of the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, highlighting selected scholarly works presented at the 2017 Engagement Scholarship Consortium (ESC) annual conference—“This Is Engagement: Best Practices in Community Engaged Scholarship.” Our goal is to present in this issue a sampling reflective of the broad range of topics covered in the concurrent sessions during the conference. This collection illustrates the diversity of activity that is engagement across the academy.

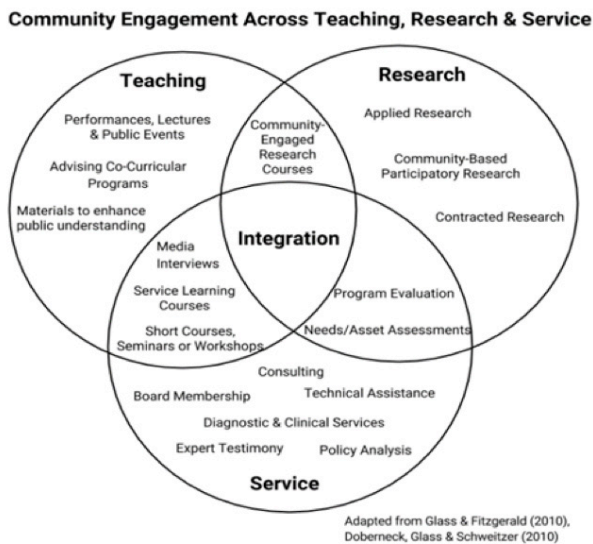
As a title, “This Is Engagement” presented a challenge from its inception. Conference titles generally target a specific theme of topical critical interest; “This Is Engagement” was intentionally wide open. It was in fact too open for some, judging from initial responses we received from colleagues and potential presenters. “How are *you* defining engagement?” some asked.

Defining engagement, we felt, had been authoritatively accomplished by the Carnegie Foundation in its Community Engagement classification, which describes it as “the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in the context of partnership and reciprocity” (*Saltmarsh & Johnson, 2018, p. 3*). Indeed, Carnegie and Ernest Boyer’s works in the 1990s inspired a long and lively national discussion on engagement and a large body of scholarship devoted to it (*R. S. Foster, 2010*).

Boyer postulated engagement-centric interrelatedness of faculty roles and academic citizenship (1990). Later scholarship on engagement reported great strides made in the institutionalization and valuation of engagement by way of university mission-driven incentives (*Beere, Votruba, & Wells, 2011; Fitzgerald, Bruns, Sonka, Furco, & Swanson, 2012*). Achievements in the field included recognition of faculty effort carried through the academic process of tenure and promotion. Other recent work has discussed faculty vitality, employment satisfaction, and even health outcomes linked to engagement (*Demb & Wade, 2012; K. M. Foster, 2010; Franz, Childers, & Sanderlin, 2012; O’Meara, Sandmann, Saltmarsh, & Giles, 2011; Wade & Demb, 2009*).

At the core of this discourse has been the demonstration of best practice in the formation of collaborative relationships, mutually beneficial partnerships, and partnership sustainability. Best practices are professional standards or behaviors and actions that reflect competence. Indeed, competence is a key factor in the application of the discipline of community engagement and development of publicly engaged scholarship. Our understanding of engagement competence has been informed through ongoing engaged research conducted by many scholars. As revealed to the profession by Glass and Fitzgerald (2010) and Doberneck, Glass, and Schweitzer (2010), Figure 1 depicts common types of competent, publicly engaged scholarship that have advanced, and identified in the context of engagement partnerships, enriching concepts of participatory, action-oriented research methodology and outreach innovations throughout the academy.

Figure 1. Common Types of Public Engagement



Note. Adapted from “Engaged Scholarship: Historical Roots, Contemporary Challenges,” by C. R. Glass and H. Fitzgerald, 2010, in H. E. Fitzgerald, C. Burack, and S. Seifer (Eds.), *Handbook of Engaged Scholarship: Contemporary Landscapes, Future Directions: Vol. I. Institutional Change*, East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, pp. 9–24, and “From Rhetoric to Reality: A Typology of Publicly Engaged Scholarship,” by D. M. Doberneck, C. R. Glass, and J. Schweitzer, 2010, *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 14(4), pp. 5–35.

Much has also been said about best practice in student engagement, in the forms of service-learning opportunities, field experiences, and other curricular and cocurricular experiential applications of engagement (Arnold, Dolenc, & Wells, 2008; Furco, 1996). Service-learning, as a community engagement pedagogy, can both enhance student growth and result in a public good. Best practices in this form of experiential education promote in-depth application of knowledge in a real-world context and foster awareness and skill development that cultivates civic and social responsibility. Ten principles espoused by Jeffrey Howard (2001) underscore that engagement incorporates civic perspectives into the traditional teaching and learning process so that learning outcomes are informed by the real needs of the community.

Community scholars and the scholarship housed within the community are also valuable components in the process of community engagement. Partnerships are predicated on the valuing of place and the people whose agency is devoted to community revitalization, economic and community development, online engagement access, social action, and activism (Redmond, Heffernan, Abawi, Brown, & Henderson, 2018; Stewart & Alrutz, 2012). Best practice in community engagement centers on reciprocity, begins with the community in mind, aims to establish a sustainable partnership, establishes and maintains a balance of power, progresses from individualistic to collectivistic action, and connects across learning contexts. Principally, it listens, connects, and is a steward of the partnership. When reciprocity is achieved, open communication is demonstrated, inclusive of everyone's voice, and represents the fundamental understanding of power and differentials. Reciprocity can be a buffer to mitigate the misuse of the partner relationship. Reciprocity is keenly important for the realization of meaningful collaboration, mutual beneficiality, and increased empowerment that can ultimately catapult and leverage sustained broader impacts (Dostilio et al., 2012; Kliewer, Sandmann, Kim, & Omerikwa, 2010). Consequently, reciprocity is an indicator of success for communities, individuals, and institutions that have formed relationships that are all-engaged, all-involved, and all-committed.

In looking over the vast array of engaged scholarship, the organizers felt there was an opportunity in focusing the conference theme on the practice of engagement. After all, engagement is by nature as diverse as those engaged in the process—faculty, staff, students, and community partners—thus, there is an infinite variety to the practice of engagement across communities far and wide. There is a clear value to examining best practices in engage-

ment, not just those that simply exhibit elements of engaged practice, but those in which competent and sustainable collaborations produce innovative, effective, and “mutually beneficial exchanges.” In other words, if asked, “What is engagement?,” one could point to such initiatives and say confidently and enthusiastically, “*This is engagement.*”

The ESC conference theme “This Is Engagement” ultimately was enthusiastically received, attracting proposals from across the nation and several countries internationally. Some 228 proposals were accepted and presented on a wide variety of engaged initiatives ranging across disciplines, addressing policy and institutional support, program design and pedagogies, collaborative strategies, and many other important aspects of engagement. A number of conference presenters submitted articles on their work for possible inclusion in this special edition of *JHEOE*. From those very fine scholarly contributions, we are pleased to present nine articles in this issue, plus abstracts of select poster presentations from ESC 2017. Additional articles based on ESC presentations may be featured in future issues of *JHEOE*.

This issue represents a wide range of engaged research and project work going on across the academy. Several featured authors focus on the key aspect of community partnerships and reciprocity, such as how relationships between faculty, students, and partners can transform transactional service into more robust engagement. Sheffield, Morgan, and Blackmore’s article reflects on their lessons learned in developing STEM partnerships with educators in rural communities. Budhai and Grant examine service-learning relationships between students and community partners, and how reciprocity manifests differently in varying projects.

Other articles highlight best practices and pedagogies for improving engagement in growing immigrant communities. Hur and Suh discuss the critical role of establishing effective partnerships within immigrant communities to help educators better understand the culture, and develop welcoming environments for new immigrants. Foulis evaluates the potential of oral history as a participatory pedagogy with university students and growing Latin@ communities.

Several authors focus on the role of engagement in addressing communities at risk and critical societal issues. Davis, Brestan-Knight, Gillis, and Travis outline an innovative collaboration between a university research group and service agencies using video to expand access to treatment for child behavior prob-

lems for families in remote rural areas. Grimmer, Lupton-Smith, Beckwith, Englert, and Messinger present a counseling, education, and research model for addressing mental health needs through engaged scholarship. Kropp and Wolfe's study addresses how engagement impacts students' attitudes in working with individuals with developmental disabilities.

This issue also examines effective research approaches for community engagement in articles such as Lake and Wendland's discussion on participatory action research. Faculty perspectives on the role of engagement in academic assignments are the focus of Terosky's reflections on the influence of community-engaged work on scholarly vitality.

We are very grateful to these authors who provided their scholarship to us both through their presentations at the 2017 Engagement Scholarship Conference and in this special ESC conference issue of *JHEOE*. We also would be remiss if we did not recognize all our dedicated colleagues in the Engagement Scholarship Consortium and at our own institution, Auburn University, who provided guidance, assistance, and unwavering support throughout the planning and presentation of the conference. We thank the leadership of *JHEOE* for the opportunity to collaborate with them on this edition, and especially extend our appreciation to the many peer reviewers and associate editors who contributed their valuable time and significant expertise to preparing these works for publication.

Notably, Boyer's last published work on engagement was in the first issue of this very journal, then called the *Journal of Public Service and Outreach*. This is a special legacy to uphold as guest editors of *JHEOE*. However, we feel the works featured in this special ESC conference issue represent a significant contribution to the practice of our field, and to the academy, which, as Boyer (1996) stated in his final article, "must reaffirm its historic commitment to what I call the scholarship of engagement" (p. 11). With that sentiment and reminder, we commend this edition to you and hope you find it informative and inspirational to your community engagement.

Guest Editors

Chippewa M. Thomas, Ph.D.

Director, Office of Faculty Engagement, Division of University Outreach

Associate Professor, Counselor Education Programs, Department of Special Education, Rehabilitation, and Counseling, College of Education

Auburn University

Ralph S. Foster, Jr., MS

Assistant Vice President for University Outreach and Public Service
Office of Public Service, Division of University Outreach

Auburn University

References

- Arnold, M. E., Dolenc, B., & Wells, E. E. (2008). Youth community engagement: A recipe for success. *Journal of Community Engaged Scholarship*, 1(1), 56–65.
- Beere, C. A., Votruba, J. C., & Wells, G. W. (2011). *Becoming an engaged campus: A practical guide for institutionalizing public engagement*. San Francisco, CA: Wiley.
- Boyer, E. (1990). *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate*. Lawrenceville, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Boyer, E. (1996). The scholarship of engagement. *Journal of Public Service & Outreach*, 1(1), 11–20.
- Demb, A., & Wade, A. (2012). A reality check: Faculty involvement in outreach and engagement. *Journal of Higher Education*, 83(3), 337–366.
- Doberneck, D. M., Glass, C. R., & Schweitzer, J. (2010). From rhetoric to reality: A typology of publicly engaged scholarship. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 14(4), 5–35.
- Dostilio, L. D., Brackmann, S. M., Edwards, K. E., Harrison, B., Kliever, B. W., & Clayton, P. H. (2012). Reciprocity: Saying what we mean and meaning what we say. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 19(1), 17–32.
- Fitzgerald, H. E., Bruns, K., Sonka, S., Furco, A., & Swanson, L. (2012). The centrality of engagement in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 16(3), 7–28.
- Foster, K. M. (2010). Taking a stand: Community-engaged scholarship on the tenure track. *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship*, 3(2), 20–30.
- Foster, R. S., Jr. (2010). Transforming the ivory tower to community center: Civic engagement in public universities. In R. Sims (Ed.), *Transformation/change in government organizations* (pp. 173–189). Charlotte, NC: Information Age.
- Franz, N., Childers, J., & Sanderlin, N. (2012). Assessing the culture of engagement on a university campus. *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship*, 5(2), 29–40.
- Furco, A. (1996). Service-learning: A balanced approach to experiential education. *Service Learning*, General, 128. Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/slceslgen/128>

- Glass, C. R., & Fitzgerald, H. (2010). Engaged scholarship: Historical roots, contemporary challenges. In H. E. Fitzgerald, C. Burack, & S. Seifer (Eds.), *Handbook of engaged scholarship: Contemporary landscapes, future directions: Vol. 1. Institutional change* (pp. 9–24). East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press.
- Howard, J. (Ed.). (2001). *Service-learning course design workbook*. Ann Arbor, MI: OCSL Press.
- Kliewer, B., Sandmann, L. R., Kim, J., & Omerikwa, A. (2010). Toward understanding reciprocity in community–university partnerships: An analysis of theories of power. Paper presented at Adult Education Research Conference 2010 (Sacramento, CA). Retrieved from <https://newprairiepress.org/aerc/2010/papers/>
- O’Meara, K., Sandmann, L., Saltmarsh, J., & Giles, D. (2011). Studying the professional lives and work of faculty involved in community engagement. *Innovative Higher Education*, 36(2), 83–96.
- Redmond, P., Heffernan, A., Abawi, L., Brown, A., & Henderson, R. (2018). An online engagement framework for higher education. *Online Learning*, 22(1), 183–204.
- Saltmarsh, J., & Johnson, M. B. (2018). *The elective Carnegie Community Engagement classification*. Boston, MA: Campus Compact.
- Stewart, T., & Alrutz, M. (2012). Meaningful relationships: Cruxes of university–community partnerships for sustainable and happy engagement. *Journal of Community Engaged Scholarship*, 5(1), 44–55.
- Wade, A., & Demb, A. (2009). A conceptual model to explore faculty community engagement. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 15(2), 5–16.

