

From the Editor...

Shannon O. Brooks



The mission of the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* (JHEOE) is to advance theory and practice related to all forms of outreach and engagement between higher education institutions and communities. This broad approach to community engagement is reflected in this issue's exploration of different dimensions of practice, theories underpinning the work, and a variety of outcomes alongside ways of measuring those outcomes. The diversity of approaches and scholarship is indicative of the growth in our field and influence of different disciplinary and methodological perspectives at work.

Research Articles

In our first research article, Garton et al. explore the stewardship of place, a concept for understanding the responsibility and impact higher education institutions (HEIs) have on regional development. This study presents a quantitative measure of HEIs through the development and validation of a stewardship of place index using publicly available data to communicate the impact of HEIs. Focusing on HEIs within the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), the authors describe ways the index can augment or replace other measures of institutional engagement, such as the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification, while offering critiques of existing measures.

In our next research article, Sánchez and Hart explore how universities can employ the collective impact framework to spur cultural change from within through the Catalyzing Impact Initiative at the University of California Davis. During preparation for the 2026 Carnegie Community Engagement reclassification, university staff used this self-study to establish three working groups around a collective impact framework focused on community partnership, assessment and integration, and communication and messaging. Survey findings and focus group data from working group members inform this case study, providing ideas for other institutions interested in exploring

collective impact to spur internal cultural and organizational change around community engagement.

Shifting focus, our next two research articles present studies of the impact of K-12 and university partnerships on youth participants. First, Luaces et al. explore the impact of the Saturday Academy (SA) on program alumni. SA is a STEM-focused enrichment program of the K-12 Initiative, which is a partnership between a university, community college, and public school district in Kansas focused on increasing access to health and STEM professions. Over 20 years, SA has served underrepresented students in primarily urban schools. This study examined SA's four areas of emphasis: career literacy and awareness, personal development, socioemotional learning, and access to resources, providing insight into developing a STEM pathway program using the SA model for student support.

Nguyen et al. explore the impact of Aspire, a SAT tutoring program aimed at students from a low-income urban high school. Over a five-year period with nine student cohorts, undergraduates at the University of Houston delivered an intervention designed to expand access to SAT preparation for economically disadvantaged students. Findings showed a positive effect on participating students' SAT scores, demonstrated a promising model for a service-learning program to improve SAT scores for students ordinarily priced out of SAT prep services, and indicated a positive impact on their long-term educational trajectory.

Reflective Essays

The Reflective Essays section features thought-provoking pieces highlighting innovative programs and research approaches with strong potential for producing future scholarship and offering initial findings to improve community-university engagement. In our first featured essay, Mayan and Smith explore discourse around non-stigmatizing language and its influence on community engagement principles and

practice when working with diverse communities, including people with lived experience (PWLE). This essay is a helpful primer on nonstigmatizing language and why its use matters. The authors challenge readers to consider who benefits from shifting language use and whether it truly represents principles of community engagement, such as reciprocity, shared knowledge, and collaborative decision-making with PWLE. This essay suggests best practices for scholars and practitioners to move beyond a surface focus on language to using language as a tool for reciprocal community engagement.

Next, Cowal et al. distill university-community partnership principles through a process combining an examination of current scholarly literature with dialogue between a community-based organization and faculty at the Center for Reimagining Leadership (CRL) at the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC). This essay provides a thoughtful model prioritizing dialogue between community and university representatives about the scholarship of partnerships in order to create closer alignment between scholarship and practice. Based on this process, the authors present a set of updated partnership principles that center community partner voices and build upon established scholarship to deepen our understanding of the role of relationships in partnerships.

Finally, our last Reflective Essay was previously published in Spanish and is being reprinted in English with permission. "Paradigmatic Shifts in the Study and Practice of Community-Campus Partnerships" tracks historical shifts in service-learning with a focus on ways community-campus partnerships have been conceptualized and examined. Bringle et al. use the Transformational Relationship Evaluation Scale (TRES) reflection framework as a tool for exploring the quality and understanding of community-campus partnerships, issuing a call for more rigorous inquiry into these partnerships across their many forms and cultural contexts.

Projects with Promise

The Projects with Promise section features

emerging practices and programs accompanied by early- to mid-stage findings and considerations for future scholarship and implementation. Articles in this issue explore strategic approaches to town-gown relationships through experiential learning and the preparation of STEM graduate students in community-engagement.

Goharipour et al. explore a vital component of town-gown relationships, the importance of placemaking for campus-community relations. The Applied Methods and Research Experience (AMRE) is a consulting program operated by the College of Wooster for 30 years that pairs undergraduate students, faculty, and staff with external organizations on summer projects. AMRE conducted a mixed-method case study analysis using community interviews and input processes. From these conversations and feedback, seven key themes emerged for strengthening town-gown relationships, leading the authors to propose four key strategic approaches that campuses and communities can employ to strengthen their engagement activities.

In "Building Capacity for STEM Outreach: Development and Implementation of a University Graduate Certificate in Community-Engaged STEM," Conway and Flanagan-Cato describe and analyze the development of a university-wide graduate certificate in community-engaged STEM at the University of Pennsylvania (Penn). They explore the rationale, need, and benefits of the program, and the process of creating the Community-Engaged STEM Certificate Program, along with competencies and plans for measuring the impact. This article provides a roadmap for other Research universities seeking to address public engagement in STEM fields and better prepare graduate students in community-engaged methods.

Producing an issue of *JHEOE* requires the collaboration and service of many individuals. We extend our gratitude to the authors, associate and managing editors, reviewers, and editorial team whose dedication makes the continued publication of the journal possible. We appreciate your interest in this scholarship and thank you for your continued readership.

