

## *A Note From the Editor . . .*

In this Spring/Summer 2004 issue of the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, we begin at the end.

Program evaluation is an essential part of ensuring that programs and activities of higher education institutions are effective. Stakeholders, policymakers, boards of trustees, funding agencies, institutional accrediting bodies, and others want to know whether the institutions that they support are succeeding. Unfortunately, when most of us set out to prove how well we are doing, we tend to focus on inputs rather than outputs. It is easier to count the number of classes and students and person-hours expended on a particular course or program or activity than it is to measure how well it met its objectives. Evaluation is often the last thing we think about, not the first.

Marie Wolff, Barbra Beck, Staci Young, Tovah Bates, and Syed M. Ahmed from the Medical College of Wisconsin provide an important counterpoint to this view in their article "A Health Advocate Program: Evaluation by Stakeholders." Here we are presented with the results of a comprehensive evaluative process in a community health advocacy program that sought feedback, primarily through interviews, from a variety of stakeholders, including advocates, case managers, and residents of public housing units. The process led to concrete recommendations for change and improvement.

Evaluation of service-learning initiatives at the University of Utah is the subject of the article "A Qualitative Assessment Project Comparing and Contrasting Faculty and Administrators' Perspectives on Service-Learning," by Marshall Welch, Lawrence H. Liese, and Amy Bergerson from the University of Utah and by Meg Stephenson, Boise, Idaho. Seeking perspectives from faculty and administrators regarding service-learning approaches, the authors convened a series of focus groups to determine the advantages and challenges of service-learning courses. Perhaps not surprisingly, administrators were found to be less knowledgeable about service-learning generally than faculty.

We have considered publishing a special international issue of the journal, but did not know whether such an idea would be well received. Juha Kettunen, President of Turku Polytechnic in Finland, must think so; he beat us to the punch! His article, "Bridge Building for the Future of the Finnish Polytechnics," provides an

interesting analysis of a comprehensive strategic planning process utilizing the "balanced scorecard" approach. This approach led to improved communication and planning among the Finnish polytechnics and will assist the Rectors' Conference on the Finnish Polytechnics in its development of future educational policy.

Civic engagement and civic renewal are crucial elements of the public service and outreach mission of most public universities today. Several articles in this issue address different aspects of this involvement.

In "Service Learning and Civic Engagement: Recommendations Based on Evaluations of a Course," Mara H. Wasburn, Kate Laskowitz-Weingart, and Michele Summers from Purdue University describe a service-learning course offered in the Department of Organizational Leadership at Purdue in 1998 which sought to instill a "culture of civic engagement" among the students participating. Through active engagement with social service providers and agency clients, and in-class discussion of articles and experiences, students came away from the class with a better understanding of what service-learning courses can and cannot do for the community and for the campus. The experience also led to seven concrete recommendations for improvement in service-learning opportunities.

Another type of service-learning course is described and discussed in "Service Learning Develops Teaching Dispositions" by Nancy B. Ruppert from the University of North Carolina-Asheville. This course is distinctive in that it focuses on preparing first year students to be better teachers in the K-12 classroom, and to have deeper appreciation for their college experience.

Working more effectively with elders is the focus of "You Learn How to Act": The Impact of Service with Elders on Student Learning" by Ellen DeLuca, Linda Andrews, and Patty Hale from Lynchburg College. This article describes a project in which beginning nursing students worked with elders served by two community service agencies in Virginia to help them learn more about improving communication skills with this special group of clients. Focus group interviews with students were utilized to obtain feedback and evaluate results.

Partnerships between scientists and teachers are the centerpiece of a science education reform effort described and analyzed in "Role Perceptions and Role Dynamics Between Graduate Scientists and K-12 Teachers in a School-University Outreach Project: Understudied Constructs" by Karen E. Bledsoe, Ruey Shieh,

Young-Shin Park, and Edith Gummer from Oregon State University. This study examined the roles and dynamics of interactions between teachers, students, and NSF-funded Graduate Teaching Fellows in K-12 Education. Inconsistency in the understanding of roles of the participants led to a call for further research by the authors to promote a fuller understanding of roles and role dynamics within teacher-scientist partnerships.

Ever since Ernest Boyer's article on the "scholarship of engagement" appeared in the Spring 1996 issue of the *Journal of Public Service and Outreach*, new ways of thinking about the service and outreach mission of universities and colleges have emerged. In "The Scholarship of Engagement: A Taxonomy of Five Emerging Practices," Derek Barker, Rutgers University, links this concept to the growing civic renewal mission of higher education and identifies five distinct approaches to engaged scholarship.

Engagement of universities with their communities can be risky business. In "Higher Education-Community Partnerships: The Politics of Engagement," Frank Fear, Nancy Creamer, Rich Pirog, Daniel Block, and LaDonna Redmond, with Mike Dickerson, Sherill Baldwin, and Gail Imig from Michigan State University address the tensions that can develop in creating, maintaining, and sustaining collaborative working relationships with communities in the arena of food-systems development. It appears that lessons from "boundary crossing" can be learned on both sides of the boundary.

Finally, we renew our tribute to Ernest Lynton, in the article "Service-Learning in Engineering Through K-12/University Partnerships: Reflections from Five Years in the Trenches," by Marybeth Lima, Louisiana State University. An engineer who wanted "to make the world a better place," the author developed a service-learning course for first year engineering students working with K-12 public schools in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Her article discusses and documents how greater community involvement, and particularly corporate involvement, enhanced the quality of the results for those engaged in this service-learning program.

As in the past, the Fall 2004/Winter 2005 issue of the Journal will be devoted to the articles submitted and accepted from the 2004 Outreach Scholarship Conference held at Penn State University in October 2004. Please feel free to share your ideas and/or concerns.

Best,

Melvin B. Hill, Jr., Editor