

Integrating a Commitment to the Public Good into the Institutional Fabric: Further Lessons from the Field

Ira Harkavy and Matthew Hartley

Abstract

This essay describes how a group of colleagues at the University of Pennsylvania have engaged in sustained efforts over a two-decade period to integrate a commitment to the public good into the fabric of institutional life.

Introduction

This essay builds on and extends earlier research and writing that we (the authors) have done, trying to understand how a commitment to local engagement, which is the term commonly used at the University of Pennsylvania (Penn), becomes embedded in the core work of the institution (*Benson, Harkavy, & Hartley, 2005; Hartley, Harkavy, & Benson, 2005*). Our inquiries have been guided by social psychologist Kurt Lewin's dictum: If you want to truly understand something, try to change it. The work undertaken by the Netter Center for Community Partnerships, with which we are both involved (one as founding director and the other as a long-standing member of the Netter Center's faculty advisory board), has constituted an ongoing participatory action research project whose primary interconnected goals are to help produce substantive change for the better and, through that process, advance knowledge and learning.

A central theme of this essay is that institutionalization occurs when organizational structures are established to support local engagement, and when a critical mass of colleagues embrace the value of this work. Resources also need to be secured and strategically deployed to ensure the development and growth of an effective organization and programs. We have found that for a higher education institution to genuinely (as opposed to putatively) embrace its civic mission, faculty members must come to see the work as central. At a research university like Penn, this means conceptualizing the work of engagement as a powerful strategy for developing new knowledge through research and teaching. Given Penn's founding purpose of serving society and promoting citizenship, it also involves working to connect local engagement efforts to the goal of improving the community and to a larger, democratic purpose (*Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011*). We believe that these approaches,

which entail both structural and ideological change, enable civic engagement to put down roots in the groves of academe (*Hartley et al., 2005*).

We begin this essay by describing the evolution of local engagement at Penn, paying particular attention to the central ideas that have informed this work. Although Penn's key strategies have not changed, the tactics to achieve them have evolved. Change requires a measure of boldness to challenge the status quo. It also requires an abundance of humility—the willingness to adapt or discard ideas that do not work well. The Netter Center is a work in progress, and the current period holds particular importance for the future of civic engagement at Penn as well as for the movement in general.

A History: Learning to Leverage the Strengths of the University, the Community, and the Schools

Since 1985, the University of Pennsylvania has been engaged with local public schools in a school-community-university partnership that was initially known as the West Philadelphia Improvement Corps.¹ Over the ensuing 25 years, this effort evolved, spawning a variety of related projects that engage Penn faculty and students with public schools and the community of West Philadelphia.

A key strategy implemented by Penn focuses on developing university-assisted community schools designed to help educate, engage, activate, and serve all members of the community in which the school is located (*Harkavy & Hartley, 2009*). The strategy assumes that community schools, like colleges and universities, can function as focal points to help create healthy urban environments and democratically engaged communities. The strategy also assumes that both universities and colleges function best in such environments. More specifically, the strategy assumes that public schools can function as environment-changing institutions, and can become strategic centers of broadly-based partnerships that genuinely engage a wide variety of community organizations and institutions. Since public schools “belong” to all members of the community, they should “serve” all members of the community. (However, no implication is intended that public schools are the only community places where learning and social organization occur. Other “learning places” include libraries, museums, private schools, faith-based organizations, and other institutions. Ideally, all of these places would collaborate.)

More than any other institution, public schools are particularly well-suited to function as neighborhood “hubs” or “centers”

around which local partnerships can be generated and developed. When they play that innovative role, schools function as community institutions par excellence. They then provide a decentralized, democratic, community-based response to rapidly changing community problems. In the process, they help young people learn better, and at increasingly higher levels, through action-oriented, collaborative, real-world activities.

For public schools to actually function as integrating community institutions, however, local, state, and national governmental and nongovernmental agencies must be effectively coordinated to help provide the myriad resources community schools need to play the greatly expanded roles that our Penn colleagues and we envision them playing in American society. How to conceive that organizational revolution, let alone implement it, poses extraordinarily complex intellectual and social challenges. But as the great American pragmatic philosopher John Dewey argued, working to solve complex, real-world problems is the best way to advance knowledge and learning, as well as the general capacity of individuals and institutions to do that work (*Benson, Harkavy, & Puckett, 2007*).

Association of American Colleges and Universities should give the highest priority to solving problems facing the communities of which they are a part. If they were to do so, they would demonstrate in concrete practice their self-professed theoretical ability to simultaneously advance knowledge, learning, and societal well-being. They would then satisfy the critical performance test proposed in 1994 by the president of the State University of New York at Buffalo, William R. Greiner, namely that “*the great universities of the twenty-first century will be judged by their ability to help solve our most urgent social problems [emphasis added]*” (*Greiner, 1994*). Further, by tackling universal problems manifested locally, Penn would be able to significantly advance learning and knowledge in general.

The idea that Penn has been developing since 1985 extends and updates John Dewey’s theory that the neighborhood school can function as the core neighborhood institution—the neighborhood institution that provides comprehensive services, galvanizes other community institutions and groups, and helps solve problems communities confront in a rapidly changing world (*Benson, et al. 2007*). Dewey recognized that if the neighborhood school were to function as a genuine community center, it would require additional human resources and support. But to our knowledge, he never identified colleges and universities as a key source of broadly based, sustained, comprehensive support for community schools. This is, in our judgment, an important missing piece of the puzzle.

It is essential to emphasize that the university-assisted community schools now being developed have a long way to go before they can fully mobilize the powerful, untapped resources of their communities, and thereby enable individuals and families to function as community problem-solvers as well as deliverers and recipients of caring, compassionate local services.

Establishing the Center for Community Partnerships

In July 1992, Penn's president, Sheldon Hackney, created the Center for Community Partnerships (the Center). To highlight the importance Hackney attached to the Center, he located it in the Office of the President and appointed one of the authors (Ira Harkavy) as its director. Symbolically and practically, the Center's creation constituted a major change in Penn's relationship with West Philadelphia and the city as a whole. In principle, by creating the Center for Community Partnerships, the university formally committed itself as a corporate entity to finding ways to use its enormous resources (i.e., student and faculty "human capital") to improve the quality of life in its local community—not only in respect to public schools, in particular, but also to economic and community development in general.

The creation of the Center for Community Partnerships was based on the assumption that one highly effective and efficient way for Penn to simultaneously serve its enlightened institutional self-interest and carry out its academic mission was for its research and teaching to strongly focus on universal problems—better schooling, healthcare, and economic development—*manifested locally in West Philadelphia and the rest of the city*. By focusing on strategic universal problems and effectively integrating general theory and concrete practice, as Benjamin Franklin advocated in the 18th century, Penn would improve symbiotically both the quality of life in its ecological community, and its academic research and teaching.

As it was optimistically initially envisioned, the Center for Community Partnerships would constitute a far-reaching innovation within the university. To help overcome the remarkably competitive fragmentation that had developed after 1945, as Penn became a large research university, the Center would identify, mobilize, and integrate Penn's vast resources in order to help transform West Philadelphia public schools into innovative community schools.

The emphasis on partnerships in the Center's name was deliberate: It acknowledged that Penn would not try to "go it alone" in West Philadelphia as it had been long accustomed to do, often to

the detriment of the wider community. The creation of the Center was also significant internally. It meant that, at least in principle, the president of the university would have—and use—an organizational vehicle to strongly encourage all components of the university to seriously consider the roles they could appropriately play in Penn's efforts to improve the quality of its off-campus environment.

Support from the Institutional Vision of Penn's Presidents

Implementation of that strategy accelerated after Judith Rodin became president in 1994. A native West Philadelphian and Penn graduate, Rodin was appointed, in part, because of her deeply felt commitment to improving Penn's local environment, and to transforming Penn into the leading urban American university (*Rodin, 2007*). An important contribution of Rodin's tenure was working to realign a number of Penn policies to promote economic development.

Amy Gutmann, Penn's current president, a distinguished political philosopher whose scholarly work explores the role public schools and universities play in advancing democracy and democratic societies, in her inaugural address in October 2004, announced a comprehensive "Penn Compact" (the Compact) designed to advance the university "from excellence to eminence." Although the Compact's first two principles—increased access to a Penn education and the integration of knowledge—had, and continue to have, significant implications for the Center's work, the third principle is particularly relevant:

The third principle of the Penn Compact is to engage locally and globally. No one mistakes Penn for an ivory tower. And no one ever will. Through our collaborative engagement with communities all over the world, Penn is poised to advance the central values of democracy: life, liberty, opportunity, and mutual respect. Effective engagement begins right here at home. We cherish our relationships with our neighbors, relationships that have strengthened Penn academically while increasing the vitality of West Philadelphia. (*Gutmann, 2004*)

Gutmann's articulation of Penn's core values and aspirations in the Compact brought an increased emphasis to realizing the university's institutional potential through working to solve real-world problems in partnership with communities. Local engagement

work moved from being largely a means to help Penn revitalize its local environment to becoming a way for it to achieve eminence as a research university.

Gutmann's efforts underscore another important dimension of engagement work. She linked work with West Philadelphia to another important goal—strengthening democracy. Penn, of course, cannot become a university dedicated to preparing a moral, engaged democratic citizenry with disconnected programs, no matter how extensive. Democratic local engagement must become a central organizing principle of the institution, embedded in its DNA, so to speak—and that is a primary goal of Gutmann's Penn Compact.

During the years of Rodin's and Gutmann's presidencies, the Center for Community Partnerships had been expanding and refining its university-assisted community school model. By 1992, in addition to afterschool, evening, and summer programs for youth and adults, the school-day programs worked with about 10 teachers in two schools. By 2006, a range of programs, including literacy, mathematics, science, health and nutrition, career guidance, and afterschool enrichment, were supported by the Center, and involved 65 teachers in five schools. In 2010, the Netter Center for Community Partnerships had become endowed and was working with seven schools in West Philadelphia, reaching approximately 4,000 students and several dozen teachers. The support of Presidents Hackney, Rodin, and Gutmann for the Center for Community Partnerships and its work has helped to powerfully advance Penn's engagement with West Philadelphia partners. In 1991-1992, three faculty members taught four Academically Based Community Service courses (Penn's term for service-learning) to approximately 100 students. By 2003-2004, a year prior to Gutmann's first year in office, 54 such courses were being offered by 43 faculty members to 1,400 Penn students. In 2011-2012, more than 1,600 Penn students (professional, graduate, and undergraduate) and 56 faculty members (from 20 departments across six of Penn's 12 schools) were engaged in West Philadelphia through these Academically Based Community Service courses.

Support by Penn Alumni

In October 2007, the Center for Community Partnerships became the Netter Center for Community Partnerships (the Netter Center) in recognition of a generous endowment by Barbara and Edward Netter. The Netters (Edward was a 1953 Penn graduate and their son, Donald, also graduated from Penn) had an abiding

interest in improving education and advancing efficient public school reform. In 2005, they supported an evaluation of the Center's university-assisted community schools both locally and nationally. The evaluation showed that the model was highly promising, cost effective, and could be adapted across the United States. The evaluation's findings were crucial to the Netters' endowing the Center. Moreover, less than a year after the Netters' gift, at the 2008 Service Nation Summit, in which both U.S. presidential candidates participated, President Gutmann pledged that Penn would fund an additional 400 community service opportunities at the Netter Center and two other centers, Civic House and the Fox Leadership Program, through 2012.

Partnerships dating back over 25 years with schools and communities in West Philadelphia, a developing and expanding critical mass of faculty and students involved in Academically Based Community Service teaching and learning (including the development of a Wharton-Netter Center Community Partnership created through an anonymous gift), and visible and sustained support for the Netter Center from President Gutmann, all indicate Penn's dedication to collaboration with communities. Nonetheless, Penn is still far from fully realizing the potential of university-assisted community schools in practice as well as Franklin's original vision for the university to educate students with "an *Inclination* join'd with an *Ability* to serve Mankind, one's Country, Friends and Family" (*Best, 1962, p. 150*).

The Netter Center's Focus on Significant, Community-Based, Real-World Problems

To Dewey, knowledge and learning were most effective when human beings worked collaboratively to solve specific, strategic, real-world problems. "Thinking," he wrote, "begins in . . . a *forked road* situation, a situation which is ambiguous, which presents a dilemma, which poses alternatives" (*Dewey, 1910, p. 11*). A focus on universal problems (e.g., poverty, unequal healthcare, substandard housing, hunger, inadequate and unequal education) as they are manifested locally is, in our judgment, the best way to apply Dewey's proposition in practice. The Netter Center's development of the Sayre Health Center is a concrete example of the application of Dewey's proposition at one of Penn's university-assisted community schools in West Philadelphia.

The Sayre Health Center.

In 2002, a group of undergraduates at Penn participating in an Academically Based Community Service seminar focused their research and service on one of the most important issues identified by members of the West Philadelphia community—the issue of health. The students' work with the community ultimately led them to propose establishing a center focused on health promotion and disease prevention at a public school in West Philadelphia, the Sayre Middle School. A public school is in many respects the ideal location for healthcare programs as well as other programs that serve the neighborhood. Public schools are not only where children learn, but also where community residents can gather and participate in a variety of activities.

From their research, the students learned that community-oriented projects often flounder because of inability to secure stable resources. The students postulated that they could accomplish their goal by integrating issues of health into the curricula at schools at Penn and at the Sayre School itself. They emphasized that the creation of a health promotion and disease prevention center at the school could serve as a learning venue for medical, dental, nursing, arts and sciences, social work, education, design, and business students. Their proposal proved so compelling that it led to the development of a school-based Community Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Center at Sayre Middle School. The Sayre Health Center was formally opened in 2007. Today, it functions as a central component of a university-assisted community school designed both to advance student learning and democratic development, and to help strengthen families and institutions within the community. Penn faculty members and students in medicine, nursing, dentistry, social policy and practice, arts and sciences, and design now work at the Sayre school (which completed a 3-year district transition to become a high school in 2007) through new and existing courses, internships, and research projects. Health promotion and service activities are also integrated into the Sayre students' curriculum. In effect, Sayre School students serve as agents of healthcare change in the Sayre neighborhood.

This example underscores how working to solve real-world problems can serve as the organizing principle for university-community partnerships. This approach, problem-solving learning, is conceptually close to problem-based learning, but different in that the focus is on solving a pressing problem in the real world. It invites faculty, students, and community members with various kinds of knowledge and expertise (disciplinary and practical) to work together on societally significant problems (e.g., poverty,

inadequate healthcare, substandard housing, hunger) as they are manifested locally.

Academically Based Community Service courses do more than provide hands-on experience for students and an opportunity for them to apply disciplinary knowledge (although they certainly provide that). Such courses enable community members, faculty, staff, students, and children to actively participate in work to solve real-world problems with all their social, cultural, and political complexity. Problem-solving learning encourages participants to respond to problems democratically, since the ideas, insights, and knowledge of academics, students (at all levels of schooling), teachers, and community members are all needed if genuine solutions are to be found and implemented.

Faculty Development

An old academic saw states that provosts and presidents come and go, but faculty abide forever. We agree with that old saw and have squarely placed faculty and their work at the core of the Netter Center's work.

Looking at the broad-based representation of senior, distinguished faculty members from across the university that are involved in the Netter Center, it is important to understand that their involvement frequently began through a relationship with the founding director, Ira Harkavy. In a real sense, the powerful influence of the Netter Center at Penn was built one colleague at a time. When recollecting key turning points in the Netter Center's history, Harkavy thinks not only of large initiatives, but also of those moments when particular faculty members became involved in community-based work and the life of the Netter Center. This grassroots strategy has helped to forge a group of deeply committed individuals.

However, the "natural" tendency at Penn and at other research universities is toward fragmentation rather than collaboration. An ongoing challenge facing the Netter Center has been developing and implementing strategies and programs that connect like-minded faculty members who are engaged in community-based work. One such program is the Agatston Urban Nutrition Initiative, which connects faculty members and students from arts and sciences, especially anthropology, and the health sciences to work on issues related to nutrition and obesity with community members (*Johnston & Harkavy, 2009*). Such complex issues invite an interdisciplinary approach.

Other efforts to organize the faculty have been less successful. For example, one of the Netter Center's four advisory boards is a faculty advisory board (founded in 1992). In 2005, the board's co-chairs and Netter Center staff attempted to organize the faculty advisory board members into groups on the basis of shared interests (e.g., communities of faith, neighborhoods, and schools; community arts partnerships, democracy and community; environment and community; community health and nutrition; science, technology engineering, and math; universities, schools, and communities). The approach failed. Although the faculty members in these groups were grappling with similar issues, they were also involved in disparate research projects that did not readily connect. It was unclear how they might productively work together. Further, few resources were available to seed new initiatives. Two lessons were learned: (1) A more organic approach to forming faculty groups was needed, and (2) resources had to be directed toward faculty-determined initiatives.

Two things also occurred that allowed Netter Center staff to adapt what they had learned about working with faculty members. First, in spring 2011, Penn was asked to participate in a Bringing Theory to Practice initiative of the American Association of Colleges and Universities. Penn, like the other participating higher education institutions, was invited to hold a university-wide civic seminar in order to discuss the state of civic engagement efforts on campus and to consider how to advance this work further. Thirty faculty members from across campus—some who were involved in the work of the Netter Center and some who were not—were invited to participate in a 3-hour discussion. The meeting was a visible success since, among other things, 26 colleagues participated, and, upon the conclusion of the seminar, indicated a strong desire to continue a discussion focused on the relationship between community-based and service-learning pedagogies, and the civic and democratic development of Penn students.

Second, a generous gift by Ruth Moorman and Sheldon Simon, both members of the Netter Center's national advisory board, funded a Graduate School of Education doctoral fellowship for a student working on a complex real-world problem in West Philadelphia that involved the Netter Center, and that required the support of faculty from across Penn's schools. A faculty committee was also created at the Netter Center to develop a pilot program to connect academic resources, particularly from the arts and sciences and education, to projects designed to advance learning and the democratic development of students at Penn as well as in West Philadelphia public schools.

The success of this effort encouraged the donors to fund the Moorman-Simon Program on Education and Schooling for Democracy and Citizenship, which is aimed at fostering university-wide faculty collaboration through work with local schools and the community. Among other things, the 5-year program, which began in 2011, provides resources (\$5,000 and support from Netter Center staff) to faculty leaders interested in developing faculty seminars. Penn has a long history of faculty seminars, in which colleagues meet voluntarily for periods of time around issues of mutual interest. The initial series of seminars focused on culture and arts; environment and health; education and schooling for democracy and citizenship; nutrition and health; and science, technology, engineering, and math. The seminar on education and schooling for democracy and citizenship is particularly innovative seminar since it brings faculty members who work at a specified public school together with the school principal, teachers, and neighborhood leaders to improve student learning and help solve school and community problems. Another seminar series was organized to support faculty members who have received course development grants since 2010 to enable them to share ideas and provide mutual support in the development of curricular materials and sustainable partnerships with the West Philadelphia community.

The Moorman-Simon Program also includes a Moorman-Simon Faculty Fellow position at the Netter Center. This rotating 2-year position, currently held by author Matthew Hartley, provides a course “buy-out” (or its equivalent) as well as research support for the faculty member to work with Netter Center staff to help coordinate and provide support to the Moorman-Simon seminar leaders. A small management group consisting of senior staff from the Netter Center, one of the chairs of the faculty advisory committee, and the Moorman-Simon Faculty Fellow meet regularly. With leadership provided by the Moorman-Simon Faculty Fellow, the faculty advisory board is grappling with important strategic questions such as: What role might its members play in identifying new faculty who are already engaged in community-based work, but who are not yet affiliated with the Netter Center? How can the engagement work of younger scholars be encouraged and supported in ways that respect the demands put upon them to achieve tenure? What institutional impediments exist that constrain engagement work? How might faculty members involved in the same site work more collaboratively? In short, the faculty advisory board is becoming more actively involved in promoting the work of the Netter Center.

Organizational Self-Reflection: Strategic Planning

The development of faculty seminars through the Moorman-Simon Program focused on significant real-world problems, and the shifting of the faculty advisory board's work to become more actively involved in encouraging local engagement activities, are the result of a powerful commitment to ongoing organizational self-reflection. An example of this self-reflection began in 2007 when the Netter Center staff, in collaboration with its national, faculty, community, and student advisory boards, embarked on a three-phase strategic planning process.

Phase I: Data Gathering

As a first step in the strategic planning process, Netter Center staff, with the help of external consultants, conducted an assessment of important (and at times overlapping) Netter Center issues, including mission and vision, programmatic offerings, leadership, institutionalization, management, operations, internal communications, human resources, fundraising and finances, and marketing and external communications. The assessment was based on data collected through interviews, surveys, and focus groups with university administrators and students, and with Netter Center staff and advisory board members. In addition, site visits were made to the West Philadelphia public schools with which the Netter Center partners. The findings revealed that

- the Center was truly seen as a bridge between West Philadelphia and the University of Pennsylvania by those on campus and those in the community.
- as is often the case with evolving organizations, the Center had experienced growing pains.
- there were small but important differences in conceptions about the Center's mission. It was clear, however, that the Center had multiple constituencies, and complex, interactive goals, which made prioritizing programs and defining clear operational criteria important.
- organizationally the Center was complex, with university-wide responsibilities and primary reporting lines through both the President's and School of Arts and Sciences Dean's Office, as well as a secondary reporting line to the provost. It also had four advisory boards.

- the Center heavily relied on the leadership and vision of its founding director.
- creating awareness of the Center's mission internally among prospective and current students and faculty, as well as garnering strong support from administrators and alumni, would be vital to the Center's sustainability and for it to realize its mission.

Phase 2: Data Analysis

The findings from the data-gathering phase were presented to a group of the Netter Center's faculty, community, student, and staff stakeholders in 2007. From the findings, the group reaffirmed the Netter Center's vision and established six areas to be addressed: programs; leadership; institutionalization; management and operations; marketing and communications; and fundraising and finances. Workgroups for each of the six areas were established, with each identifying goals and strategies for its respective issue.

Phase 3: The Development of the Strategic Plan

Each workgroup analyzed the strengths and challenges affecting its issue area, and developed concrete plans to guide the organization. The workgroups then developed implementation grids organizing activities in terms of goals, objectives, and strategies. Each Netter Center staff workgroup was charged with developing an implementation strategy that included action steps, tactics, person(s) responsible, and timelines. Implementation of the strategic plan began in 2008.

Strategic Plan: Implementation

In 2008-2009, committees were formed by the Netter Center's national advisory board members to monitor and implement recommendations in the six critical areas identified through the strategic planning process. Today, a strategic planning committee meets (via teleconference) before every board meeting to review progress made to date, and to help set the agenda going forward. The programs committee advises Netter Center staff on programming, and works closely with student leaders in their efforts to promote problem-solving learning across Penn's curriculum. A budget committee reviews the Netter Center's revenue and expenses. A development committee advises on strategic fundraising efforts. A marketing committee provides feedback on the Netter Center's internal and external marketing efforts, including

publications, branding, social media, and events. Finally, a replication committee advises on the Center's national adaptation efforts, particularly those related to regional training centers for the university-assisted community school model. Although less focused on helping to monitor the strategic plan, the Netter Center's faculty, community, and student boards, as well as its staff, on a day-to-day basis help define and implement strategies and programs to realize the plan's goals and recommendations. The director, his staff, and the leadership team are ultimately responsible for implementation of the strategic plan.

In summary, the strategic plan, though completed in 2008, continues to be a "living document" informing strategic decision-making in substantive ways.

Institutionalizing Support for Community Engagement

The University of Pennsylvania's experience offers an example of how to institutionalize a commitment to university-community engagement. Scholars have pointed to factors that tend to promote or impede the institutionalization of civic engagement activities on campuses. Kelly Ward's (1996) examination of five institutions concluded that substantive commitment is indicated by the presence of:

- an office supporting the work;
- broad-based discussions by faculty members about how to incorporate engagement into the curriculum; and
- the tangible and symbolic support of institutional leaders.

Barbara Holland's (1997) analysis of 23 institutional case studies supports and extends Ward's findings. Holland identified seven factors that indicate a commitment to service:

1. an institution's historic and currently stated mission;
2. promotion, tenure, and hiring guidelines;
3. organizational structures (e.g., a campus unit dedicated to supporting service activities);
4. student involvement;
5. faculty involvement;

6. community involvement; and
7. campus publications.

Holland also indicated the importance of differentiating between institutions by level of commitment to engagement: low relevance, medium relevance, or high relevance. The resulting matrix paints in broad brushstrokes a picture of what institutionalization entails. Holland underscored that the matrix is descriptive not prescriptive. “Without further research, the relationship, if any, among the levels of commitment to service is not clear, especially when one considers that movement could be in any direction on the matrix” (p. 40).

Identifying such factors is quite useful when combined with an analysis of complex, locally-shaped circumstances and experiences, such as those at the University of Pennsylvania (*Hartley et al., 2005*). One framework that has been particularly helpful to us was developed by organizational theorists Paul S. Goodman and James W. Dean (1982). They pointed to a multi-stage process of institutionalization: It begins when people become aware of a new activity or behavior—someone tells them about it and explains its value. In the second stage, a small group of individuals tries the new behavior. The experimentation yields important information about how valuable and viable it is in that specific organizational context (i.e., Does it work, and do others find it acceptable or tolerable?). If the new behavior turns out to be more satisfying, effective, or enjoyable than its alternative (or if it attracts positive attention from valued peers or superiors), more people will try it, and some individuals will begin preferring the behavior. If enough individuals come to prefer the behavior, either a majority of people within the organization or the majority of influential people who control roles and rewards, then a new institutional norm is established. A consensus emerges that the behavior is appropriate and valuable. Institutionalization is achieved when people within the organization view the behavior as an expression of the core purpose of the institution: “This is who we are.”

What Goodman and Dean (1982), and Ward (1996) and Holland (1997) allude to is that institutionalization is the product of both structural and ideological change (*Hartley et al., 2005*). Structural elements (e.g., more resources, new programs and policies) alone are insufficient to alter the day-to-day behaviors of individuals, particularly those working in loosely coupled organizations like colleges and universities (*Weick, 1976*). Conversely, passionate advocates for an idea will fail to produce broad-based change if they

cannot secure adequate resources. Structure and ideology are the twin drivers of institutionalized change, and they are mutually reinforcing. The creation of a new structure (e.g., the Center for Community Partnerships) lends legitimacy to the effort, and the symbolic support of the ideas by important figures (e.g., the university's presidents) produces an environment where new programs and supportive policies can be enacted (see Figure 1).

Structural elements	Ideological elements
Introducing the Idea of University-Community Engagement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of the Center allows for the coordination of activities, and support of faculty members interested in community-based work • Efforts by the Center staff to secure the support of individual faculty members in order to create a coalition of support • Creation of advisory boards of key constituencies helps inform the work of the Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active presidential endorsement of the Center lends legitimacy to its core goals • Local engagement viewed as an expression of Benjamin Franklin's founding vision for Penn • Individual faculty are assisted in integrating engagement activities into their work • Creation of faculty advisory board enables core group of faculty colleagues to discuss community-based work, and to reinforce one another's commitment
Encouraging the Behavior of University-Community Engagement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of supports to make it easier for faculty to try community engagement (e.g., course development grants; maintaining strong, reciprocal university/community partnerships) • Offering of logistical support for faculty members who want to become more involved (e.g., maintaining strong partnerships where community partners understand how to support students enrolled in Academically Based Community Service courses) • Allocation of staff resources to support sustained efforts by faculty, staff, and students who want to become involved • Creation of structures (e.g., board of trustees, subcommittee) on local engagement that underscore the importance of the work • Creation of new structures that signal institutional support at the highest level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presidential support of local engagement • Numerous service opportunities enable faculty to experience the activity for themselves • A growing number of faculty colleagues are able to speak to the benefits of Academically Based Community Service • Programs (e.g., course development grants) allow more people to become involved and to see the value of the work • Securing of significant resources through fundraising underscores that local engagement is not a fad
Toward Normative Consensus by the University Community	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linkage of the idea of local engagement to institutional planning processes (e.g., strategic planning, capital campaign planning, accreditation) • Use of evaluation and assessment to determine impact • Expansion of leadership advocating for community-based teaching and research courses to a widening circle of faculty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catalytic and transformative gifts (including the endowment of the Center) underscore the importance and permanence of the Center's work • Faculty advisory board encourages its members to become actively involved in promoting greater commitment to community-based work (e.g., strategic planning, assessment)

Figure 1. Structural and Ideological Dimensions of Change through the work of the Netter Center for Community Partnerships

In the early days of the Netter Center's work (from 1985 to 1992), a small band of faculty and staff members who were involved in the community introduced the idea of community-based teaching and research at Penn. These pioneers' knowledge and experience helped pave the way for others by showing how this work could be integrated into the core activities of faculty members. Local engagement efforts, however, did not begin to significantly expand until the Center for Community Partnerships was established in 1992 by Penn's President Hackney. During its first few years, the Center (and its founding director) focused on building institutional alliances, especially among faculty colleagues. This was accomplished through individual relationship building. Organizational structures, like the faculty advisory board, were also created to draw people together to support and encourage the work.

From 1995 to 2006, further efforts were made to "encourage the behavior." Support from successive presidents (Hackney [1981-1993], Rodin [1994-2004], and Gutmann [2004-present]), who saw the clear link between Benjamin Franklin's founding mission and the imperative to engage locally, helped establish the legitimacy of the Center's activities. A Neighborhood Initiatives subcommittee of Penn's board of trustees also lent legitimacy to institutionalization efforts. The expansion of faculty development initiatives, such as increased use of course development grants, enabled new faculty members to integrate community-based activities into their teaching and research. Moreover, the development of a number of strong, *long-term* community partnerships, especially at local schools, enabled more faculty members to participate because it made it easier for them to find meaningful projects for their courses.

Within the past 5 years (2006-2011), local engagement efforts have achieved normative consensus. The notion of local engagement is now a pervasive idea, and is viewed as a hallmark of Penn as a research university. It informs institutional planning processes like the formation of Penn's strategic plan, and it is a core component of Penn's capital campaign. Indeed, fundraising success has not only produced important resources to support programmatic efforts (structural change), but has played a key role in legitimizing Penn's engagement work. One of the most important landmarks for the Center for Community Partnerships was the support of Barbara and Edward Netter, which created an endowment and resulted in the naming of the Netter Center. More recent efforts, like the Moorman-Simon Program, promise to greatly expand the

number of Penn's faculty members engaged in democratic, locally focused, civic work.

Penn's re-accreditation process in 2012-2013 will focus on elements of the Penn Compact, with a subcommittee focusing entirely on local engagement and its contribution to the education of undergraduate students. Because of his scholarly work in this area and connection to the Netter Center, Matthew Hartley was selected to serve as the faculty chair of this accreditation committee.

Conclusion

In this essay, we have tried to provide an overview of institutional efforts required to support the University of Pennsylvania's commitment to civic engagement, and to building sustainable partnerships with Penn's neighbors in West Philadelphia. This civic imperative has been an aspirational ideal since Penn's founding by Benjamin Franklin. It remains a work in progress. This year, 2012, is the 20th anniversary of the Netter Center for Community Partnerships. Increased faculty and student involvement; the development of numerous sustained, democratic partnerships in the community; and the level of support for local engagement by successive presidents and Penn's board of trustees make it clear that we have come a long, long way.

These indicators of progress also are signs of a significant reshaping of Penn's culture. One of our senior faculty colleagues, reflecting on his experiences, said recently that 15 years ago, if someone had said they were involved in community-based teaching or research, it would have been viewed as a nice but perhaps somewhat quirky activity. Today, the value of that work is accepted. Such activities are regularly profiled in Penn's institutional literature—alumni magazines and materials for the current capital campaign. It is a striking change. It is this shift in culture, supported by institutional structures and policies, that is the measure of Penn's success in this area.

There is still much to be done. The dramatic growth of local engagement efforts at a highly decentralized university like Penn also means that many community-based activities are disconnected. Faculty members who have been involved with a local school for some time are at times surprised to learn that other colleagues are involved there as well. New seminars through the Moorman-Simon Program are drawing together faculty from the same sites of practice. We see this as a promising development. We have only begun to tap the possibilities of drawing on the full

resources of the university and the community to help solve complex problems, and in doing so advancing knowledge and learning “for the relief of man’s estate” (*Bacon, 1605/2005*), which is our most important responsibility as a research university. So we continue to work with our colleagues on campus, and with our partners in the community. Stated directly, we are convinced that the Netter Center’s ongoing participatory action research project of organizational development and community and institutional change is helping Penn make noticeable progress toward realizing Franklin’s dream of a civic, engaged, cosmopolitan higher education institution that effectively educates its students with an “inclination joined with an ability to serve” (*Best, 1962, p. 150*).

Endnote

1. This history draws on Harkavy, 2011.

References

- Bacon, F. (2005). *The advancement of learning*. NuVision Publication, LLC. (Original work published 1605). Retrieved February 26, 2012, from http://books.google.com/books?id=061DpZcVZE8C&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false
- Benson, L., Harkavy, I., & Hartley, M. (2005). Integrating a commitment to the public good into the institutional fabric. In A. J. Kezar, T. Chambers, & J. Burkhardt (Eds.), *Higher education for the public good: Emerging voices from a national movement*. (p. 185 – 216) San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Benson, L., Harkavy, I., & Puckett, J. (2007). *Dewey’s dream: Universities and democracies in an age of education reform*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Best, J. H. (1962). *Benjamin Franklin on education*. New York, NY: Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Dewey, J. (1910). *How we think*. New York, NY: D.C. Heath.
- Goodman, P. S., & Dean, J. W. (1982). Creating long-term organizational change. In P. S. Goodman (Ed.), *Change in organizations*. (p. 226 – 279) San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Greiner, W. R. (1994). In the total of all these acts: How can American universities address the urban agenda. *Universities and Community Schools*, 4(1-2), 12.
- Gutmann, A. (2004). *Inaugural address*. Retrieved from http://www.upenn.edu/almanac/volumes/v51/n08/inaug_ag_speech.html
- Harkavy, I. (2011). *The role of the university in the social fabric*. Comments presented at Thomas Foley’s inauguration as president of Mount Aloysius College, Cresson, PA.
- Harkavy, I., & Hartley, M. (2009). University-school-community partnerships for youth development and democratic renewal. *New Directions for Youth Development*, 122, 7-18.

- Hartley, M., Harkavy, I., & Benson, L. (2005). Putting down roots in the groves of academe: The challenges of institutionalizing service-learning. In D. Butin (Ed.), *Looking in, teaching out: Critical issues and directions in service-learning*. (p. 205 – 222) New York, NY: Palgrave/St. Martin's Press.
- Holland, B. (1997). Analyzing institutional commitment to service: A model of key organizational factors. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 4, 30-41.
- Johnston, F., & Harkavy, I. (2009). *The obesity culture: Strategies for change, public health and university-community partnerships*. St. Ives, UK: Smith-Gordon.
- Rodin, J. (2007). *The university and urban revival: Out of the ivory tower and into the streets*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Saltmarsh, J., & Hartley, M. (Eds.). (2011). *To serve a larger purpose: Engagement for democracy and the transformation of higher education*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Ward, K. (1996). Service-learning and student volunteerism: Reflections on institutional commitment. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 3, 55-65.
- Weick, K. E. (1976). Educational organizations as loosely coupled systems. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 21, 1-19.

About the Authors

Ira Harkavy is the associate vice president and director of the Netter Center for Community Partnerships at the University of Pennsylvania. His research focuses on the history and current practice of university civic engagement, particularly how to advance democratic university-community-school partnerships in the immediate future. Harkavy earned his bachelor's degree and Ph.D. in history from the University of Pennsylvania.

Matthew Hartley is associate professor and chair of the Higher Education Division, Graduate School of Education, and the Moorman-Simon Faculty Fellow, Netter Center for Community Partnerships, at the University of Pennsylvania. His research focuses on academic governance and organizational change at colleges and universities, particularly their civic missions. Hartley earned his bachelor's degree from Colby College, and his master's degree and Ed.D. from Harvard's Graduate School of Education.