

## CHAPTER ONE

# OUTREACH AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

## Understanding the Context

“The envy of the world!” (Yudof, 2008). “The crown jewels of America’s human-capital economy!” (Farrell, 2009). “A ticket out of poverty!” (Clark, 2008). “The world’s premier system” (Diamond & Adam, 2000, p. 151). These are among the many positive ways in which U.S. higher education has been described. In 2005, nearly 4,300 degree-granting institutions served approximately 17.5 million people in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). Included in this mix are institutions that are public and private; for-profit and not-for-profit; urban and rural; large and small; brick-and-mortar and virtual; 2-year, 4-year, and graduate; hundreds of years old and relatively new. The accomplishments of these diverse institutions are striking. They educate the scientists and engineers; the teachers, doctors, dentists, and veterinarians; the lawyers, artists, social workers, and theologians; and the government, business, and community leaders who will serve our communities. In fact, almost every person who will play a significant role in the country’s future will first acquire an education—and most likely a degree—from one of the colleges or universities in the United States. Although educating the future workforce and citizenry is the ultimate goal of higher education, these institutions do not stop with educating students. They also provide the research that drives the future, continuing education for those in the workforce, and a variety of benefits and services for their communities.

## A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

History shows that U.S. higher education has, by and large, addressed public needs. Originally built on the British model of education, the early emphasis was on teaching, and for a period of more than 200 years, colleges focused on undergraduate education, the liberal arts, and the preparation of educated men to serve society, especially in the fields of education, law, medicine, and ministry (Chambers, 2005; Fisher, Fabricant, & Simmons, 2004; Kerr, 1991). In this way, they served the needs of their communities. Then, in the mid-1800s, the role of higher education expanded.

After the Civil War, U.S. institutions were influenced by the German model of higher education, which introduced the importance of research and emphasized the researcher whose work was supported by apprentices (Bok, 1982). In the late 1800s and early 1900s, passage of federal legislation led to significant changes in higher education. The Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890 created the land-grant colleges that brought agricultural and “the mechanical arts” to large segments of the population. Along with training the professionals needed to support the developing nation, universities began conducting research to improve farming practices and domestic skills (Chambers, 2005). In addition, the Hatch Act of 1887 created the Agricultural Experiment Stations, which supported theoretical and applied research related primarily to agricultural production, and the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 created the Cooperative Extension Service, an outreach program that enabled land-grant universities to take research and apply it to local settings. The program also reached out to the farm population by taking instruction in agriculture and home economics to those not attending college.

The years following World War II were a period of significant change for the nation’s higher education institutions. The Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944, better known as the GI Bill, led to enormous growth in enrollments. Universities served their communities and the nation by absorbing thousands of returning servicemen into their degree programs. In the ten years between 1940 and 1950, enrollments increased by 78% from 1.49 million to 2.65 million, and the number of degrees conferred more than

doubled from 216,521 to 498,586 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). At the same time, the importance of research was escalating.

The commitment to research was propelled by the federal government's investment in scientific research, an investment that grew dramatically after World War II and continued to escalate after the Soviet Union launched *Sputnik* in 1957. As an example, in 1953 the federal government provided colleges and universities with \$280 million to support R&D work; by 1970, that figure was up to \$2.4 billion, more than an eightfold increase (National Science Foundation, 2008). Adding nonfederal support, by 1970 colleges and universities were spending more than \$3 billion on R&D. With this investment, universities served society by providing the knowledge base underlying much of the country's scientific progress.

Securing federal grants became increasingly important. Faculty who were awarded grants added to a university's reputation as much as they added to its revenue stream. Graduate students—the future faculty—were most often trained at “research universities,” where they were exposed to a culture that valued research productivity above all else. They took this value system with them to the diverse institutions that hired them, thereby spreading the commitment to research throughout higher education. These post-World War II changes had a profound impact on higher education. Research showed that, over time (1969, 1975, 1984, 1989), interest in teaching declined in *every type* of institution—research, doctoral, comprehensive, liberal arts, and two-year—and the importance of publication as a factor in granting tenure increased (Russell, 1992). Research and graduate education carried enhanced status. In many institutions, the concept of service moved away from service to society and was replaced with service to the institution or the profession. This shift demonstrates the profound impact of the government's significant, sustained funding for research.

Perhaps to counter the growing commitment to research, some higher education leaders began to call upon universities to pay more attention to their communities, especially the urban communities around them. Noted historian Henry Steele Commager (1960) appealed to universities to be more responsive to the needs of their cities: “[Faculty] should live in the city;

they should participate actively in the cultural life in the city.... They should be encouraged to take an active part in politics and public affairs. In all of those activities the university itself should cooperate, by making it convenient for its members to live in the city; by making the facilities available for civic purposes; by encouraging political or journalistic or even economic responsibility by members of its faculty" (pp. 88–89). Six years later, J. Martin Klotzsche (1966), chancellor of the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, urged urban universities to apply research to address the problems of their cities, encouraged faculty from diverse disciplines to improve urban life, and even suggested that university resources should be committed to this task.

Although the calls for universities to be engaged with their communities increased over the years, public engagement was vying for attention with many other priorities. In 1992, the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) distributed a survey to representatives of coordinating boards, governing boards, and community college boards. The survey included a list of 14 topics that respondents were to rate in terms of their importance in the coming years. The list included issues such as "Quality of undergraduate education," and "Minority student access and achievement" (Russell, 1992, p. 14). Not one of the 14 topics related to engagement! SHEEO also included an open-ended question asking respondents to list nonfinancial issues that were of concern to them. Engagement failed to attract any attention in that section either!

Change was on the way, however. Ernest Boyer published *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* in 1990, and his concept of four forms of scholarship—discovery, teaching, integration, and application (later called *engagement*)—began to influence campus conversations.

This brief overview shows clearly that U.S. higher education has traditionally served a public purpose, generally by preparing the graduates needed by the community and conducting the basic research upon which the nation and its communities could build. Over the past two decades, there has been a revival of interest in more directly serving the public through the extension and application of campus-based knowledge.

## SELECTING AND DEFINING TERMS

Agreed-upon definitions are prerequisite for meaningful dialogue and debate, yet the fundamental terms that relate to the subject of this book are not clearly understood. Eavesdrop on a group of faculty talking about this work, and you are likely to find that they use different terms to refer to the same type of activity, and the same term to refer to different activities. In order for the campus to engage in rich and productive discussions—to avoid miscommunicating—the faculty, staff, and administrators must have a shared understanding of terms and definitions.

What should the work with outside groups be called? A review of the literature uncovers a variety of terms: *community engagement*, *civic engagement*, *public engagement*, *public service*, *community service*, *outreach*, and *regional stewardship*. What terms are used is not nearly as important as the need for everyone at the institution to ascribe the same meaning to the terms.

From experience, Northern Kentucky University (NKU) discovered that terms and their definitions must be broadly and repeatedly disseminated. Without this, there is a significant risk that intracampus communication will be impeded and arguing over terms will divert attention from issues more directly related to doing the work. NKU also found that definitions are most effectively communicated when accompanied by examples to highlight the scope of each term and the differences among terms.

Four important terms are defined here: outreach, public engagement, civic engagement, and community. Other terms, such as service learning, scholarship of engagement, and community-based research (CBR), are more specific to a particular type of work and will be explained in the later chapters.

### OUTREACH AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Although *outreach* is an older term, dating back to the creation of the land-grant universities and their extension offices (Ramaley, 2005), NKU found it a useful term to describe work that involves reaching out to the community—work that is “one-way.” At NKU, “outreach refers to the provision of programs,

services, activities, and/or expertise to those outside the traditional university community of faculty, staff, and on-campus students. Outreach is one-way, with the university being the provider either on a gratis basis or with an associated charge” (Northern Kentucky University, 2006, p. 11).

After much discussion and debate, NKU adopted the term *public engagement* as the label for its partnership work with the community. NKU defined public engagement, saying: “[It] involves a partnership in which there is mutually beneficial, two-way interaction between the university and some entity within the metropolitan region [Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky] or the Commonwealth [of Kentucky]” (Northern Kentucky University, 2006, p. 11). Since originally defining the term, NKU has expanded the definition to include work irrespective of geographic location, which is consistent with how the term is used in the engagement literature.

Both outreach and public engagement are part of a continuum of activities that take resources and expertise to off-campus locations and bring the public or subsets of the public onto the campus. At one end of the continuum there is “outreach” in which the community is not involved in planning or implementation; the university has total control. Usually, the use of campus facilities, such as museums and athletic fields, and attendance at university events, such as theater and musical productions, fall at this end of the continuum. At the other end is public engagement at its purest—that is, there is complete reciprocity and total sharing of every step in planning and implementation. Most activities fall between these two extremes. This book focuses primarily on work that falls toward the public engagement end.

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The term *civic engagement* is sometimes used as an alternative to public engagement, but more often it is used in discussions about students’ involvement in the community when a goal of that involvement is students’ civic learning. That is, many student activities not only benefit the community but also develop the motivation, skills, and understanding students need to become active, contributing members of their communities. Although

public engagement is the term used throughout most of this book, civic engagement is used in some instances to focus particularly on students' engagement and their civic learning.

## COMMUNITY

Since public engagement, by definition, involves the community, it is important to define the term *community*. This is not an easy task. In 1955, sociologist George Hillery identified 94 different definitions of community, and this was before the advent of online communities! Community is frequently defined geographically, such as a town, a county, or a state. It can also be defined by persons' identity or status, such as women or Muslims; by belief systems or interest areas, such as liberals, conservatives, or chess players; by age or occupation, such as preschoolers or mine workers; and by online connections, such as a Facebook community or a group of distance learners. Determining the community focus is an important part of institutional planning and will be discussed in Chapter 3.

## SERVICES: THE SCOPE OF THE WORK

Public engagement encompasses a variety of services. Although what follows describes services as being provided by one of three entities—the institution, the faculty and professional staff, and the students—it is generally the case that an activity is the combined effort of two or more of these groups.

## FROM THE INSTITUTION

The institution can serve the needs of the community in many ways, often sharing facilities or providing programs. Among the facilities that colleges and universities are most likely to share are libraries, athletic and wellness facilities, museums, art galleries, classrooms and meeting rooms, and expensive scientific equipment. Sometimes there is a charge, sometimes not.

Colleges and universities also offer programs on and off campus for the benefit of the public. These might include, for example, summer athletic or academic camps for children, health clinics,

and mental health facilities. Programs might be cultural activities, such as musical programs, theater productions, or lectures, or they might be forums or debates on controversial topics. Programs may be open to the general public or serve specific audiences, such as government and business leaders. Colleges and universities also provide educational programs such as continuing education for various professional groups, noncredit adult education programs such as leadership training and English as a second language, and enrichment programs such as social networking and gardening.

The sharing of resources and programs is generally one-way rather than a partnership. Therefore, it is outreach by NKU's definition, and it is important to the university's relationship with its neighboring community. This is especially true in smaller communities where there may be limited opportunities and options. The college or university may be the major—or sole—provider of cultural and educational enrichment opportunities.

#### FROM THE FACULTY AND PROFESSIONAL STAFF

Faculty and professional staff apply their expertise to issues and challenges facing their community, however community is defined. They serve as board members of nonprofit organizations, speakers and panelists at community events, and jurors for competitions in various areas such as art, music, and creative writing. They conduct applied research, undertake policy analyses, and share best practices on issues confronting the community. Faculty and professional staff provide consulting help and technical assistance in program development and evaluation, data analysis, grant writing, technology assessment, and fundraising; in many instances, they actually assist community organizations with implementation in these areas. Faculty and professional staff create, implement, and evaluate demonstration programs to address particular challenges. They facilitate strategic planning activities and serve as experts to assist in planning or to enlighten controversial community discussions. They create works of art or music to support special events. They offer on-site training programs to businesses and nonprofit organizations. The list goes on and on, and the message is clear: faculty and professional staff have a great deal to offer to their communities.



## FROM THE STUDENTS

Students are engaged in the community in a myriad of ways. They volunteer, often through their sororities and fraternities, their religious groups, or their academic and nonacademic clubs. Their contributions range from one-day activities, such as painting a local nonprofit facility, to yearlong activities, such as tutoring in the local schools. During election years, they may undertake a “get-out-the-vote” campaign. Their various volunteer activities are often organized by the university’s student affairs office.

In connection with credit-bearing activities, students assist with many of the faculty-directed public engagement activities, such as community-based research, program evaluation, strategic planning, specialized training programs, and a host of activities to improve P–12 education. These activities as well as service learning—a common form of student engagement—are generally tied to the students’ academic courses; they are discussed in Chapter 8. Students are also involved in the community through internships, co-op experiences, and practica.

## SECTORS

In addressing university presidents at the American Association of State Colleges and Universities’ (AASCU) 2004 annual meeting, James Votruba asked rhetorically: “What do our communities want from us?” He then explained: “Certainly they want well-educated graduates who can communicate clearly, think critically, possess a strong work ethic, and have skills that align with local employment needs. But this isn’t all they want. They want us to be full partners in helping to strengthen K–12 education, expand economic development, enhance local government effectiveness, contribute to regional planning, nurture the nonprofit sector, expand the arts, improve the environment, and much more. In short, they want us to be fully engaged in helping to shape their future” (p. 4).

The sectors of the community with which a particular campus is most likely to engage are a function of the resources of the campus and the needs and nature of the community in which the campus is located. Commonly served sectors include

K–12 education, economic development, health care, agriculture, environment, nonprofits, and the government. The fact that there are so many sectors with which campuses might work highlights the importance of strategic planning, which is discussed in Chapter 3. Specifics on the selection of an appropriate partner are discussed in Chapter 11.

## WHAT IS DRIVING ENGAGEMENT?

A variety of factors are driving universities to increase their engagement activities. The most significant are described here.

### NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY

Communities across the country are facing enormous problems: economic stagnation, underperforming schools, escalating costs and insufficient access to health care, increasing disparities between rich and poor, environmental threats, intolerance, and lack of civil discourse. Government, business, and education leaders are looking to their local colleges and universities to help address these problems. Although higher education should not own these problems, colleges and universities have a significant role to play. In partnership with their local community, they can apply the vast knowledge resources of their campuses as well as other campus resources such as human capital to help ameliorate community problems.

### CONTEMPORARY VIEWS OF KNOWLEDGE

A powerful driver of this work centers on the concept of knowledge: both its creation and its dissemination. Traditional views suggest that knowledge is created by the objective, analytical, and experimental work of the scientist, one who is working away from the *real world*, detached from the application of his findings (Zlotkowski, 2002b). This is considered rigorous science. Donald Schön, however, argued that rigor and relevance are quite compatible and much knowledge is to be gained from what he calls *action research*. In 1983, Schön wrote: “The dilemma of rigor or relevance may be dissolved if we can develop an epistemology of

practice which places technical problem solving within a broader context of reflective inquiry, shows how reflection-in-action may be rigorous in its own right, and *links the art of practice . . . to the scientist's art of research*" [emphasis added] (p. 69). Twelve years later in proposing a new epistemology, Schön (1995) suggested: "We should think about practice as a setting not only for the application of knowledge but for its generation. We should ask not only how practitioners can better apply the results of academic research, but also what kinds of knowing are already embedded in competent practice" (p. 29). Schön's point is that knowledge is created not only in the laboratory but also in the real world, and in fact, he indicates that it already exists in the world of practice. Lee Shulman (1997), former president of The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, supported the importance of the world of practice to the creation of knowledge, particularly for the professions: "Although a significant portion of the knowledge base of a profession is generated by scholars in the academy, it is not professional knowledge unless and until it is enacted in the crucible of 'the field.' The field of *practice* is the place where professions do their work, and claims for knowledge must pass the ultimate test of value in practice" (p. 154). Engagement work takes the faculty and the students into the real world where they create and test new knowledge in the process of applying existing knowledge.

Recent views of knowledge suggest that experts are not the only source of knowledge. In his book *The Wisdom of Crowds: Why the Many Are Smarter Than the Few and How Collective Wisdom Shapes Business, Economies, Societies, and Nations*, James Surowiecki (2004) talks about the wisdom that is found in groups of ordinary people, pointing out that their judgment and knowledge often exceed that of experts. The incredible success of Wikipedia shows that the general public believes that knowledge resides among many people, not just with the experts. And, at least some research—though not uncontested—has suggested that the error rate in Wikipedia is similar to that in sources prepared exclusively by experts (Anderson, 2006; Giles, 2005).

To keep new knowledge confined within the boundaries of academe makes little sense; it should be shared. Higher education has a strong history of sharing knowledge through publication in

professional journals and presentations at professional meetings. But another way—and one with the potential for significant impact—is to share knowledge with the community by applying it to address community problems. As Ernest Lynton and Sandra Elman (1987) wrote: “As a group, [universities] need to involve themselves not only in the production of intellectual raw material through basic research but also in the synthesis, interpretation, distribution, and ingestion of knowledge so that it indeed becomes absorbed by society” (p. 14). At the same time, academics must be open to the knowledge and expertise that lies within the community. Knowledge transmission is, after all, not unidimensional.

#### CONTEMPORARY VIEWS OF SCHOLARSHIP

Traditionally, scholarship was equated with research, and engaging in scholarly activities meant working to create new knowledge. Boyer (1990) called this the *scholarship of discovery* and recognized its importance, but he recognized that other forms of scholarship were also important, specifically the scholarship of teaching, integration, and application, later called engagement. In interpreting and expanding upon Boyer’s work, Eugene Rice (2005b) wrote about the importance of engagement. He indicated that one needs to do more than share results with the community; instead, he argued that the community should be involved from the very beginning in the planning and later implementation of a project. There needs to be *genuine collaboration*.

Although Boyer was not the first to talk about the importance of expanding the role of faculty, his book, with its four forms of scholarship, provided the tipping point that stimulated debate and discussion on many campuses. His conceptualization of these four forms of scholarship is congruent with the contemporary views of knowledge described earlier in this chapter.

#### CONCERN OVER EDUCATIONAL QUALITY

Both inside and outside the academy there is concern over the quality of education provided to college students today. Business leaders, for example, complain that today’s college graduates lack

the communication and analytical skills to be successful. Some in higher education have pointed out that lecture-based learning is of limited value. (See, for example, Howard, 1998.) Shulman (1997) pointed out: “Authentic and enduring learning occurs when the learner is an *active* agent in the process” (p. 164). As a result of these observations, there has been increasing interest in pedagogies that engage students in their learning inside and outside the classroom. Service learning and CBR are recommended as powerful forms of engaged learning. (See, for example, Antonio, Astin, & Cress, 2000; Eyler, Giles, Stenson, & Gray, 2001; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 2005; and Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005.)

Another concern is the absence of civic learning. Although universities have historically been involved in preparing students for citizenship in a democratic society, many students and their families now seem more interested in ensuring that students acquire vocational skills. Yet, the future of a democratic society continues to rest on an informed and engaged citizenry. In the past 20 years, many have recognized the need to revive the teaching of civic skills and civic responsibility. Engagement with the community helps achieve this goal. (See, for example, Colby, Beaumont, Ehrlich, & Corngold, 2007; Jacoby, 2009.)

### CRITICISMS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

In addition to concerns about its quality, the public has been critical of numerous other aspects of higher education. According to Alexander McCormick (2009), director of the National Survey of Student Engagement, the two most enduring criticisms are cost and slippage in international rankings. The public objects that tuition rises faster than inflation, especially since they often erroneously believe that faculty do not work very hard for their salaries and have advantages—such as tenure and “summers off”—that are not available to people working in other fields. Those aware of international rankings want to know why the United States is not number one in terms of the percentage of the population with college degrees and every other measure of academic achievement.

Over the past generation, the public has shifted from seeing higher education as a public good to seeing it as a private benefit.

As Boyer wrote in 1996: “What I find most disturbing... is a growing feeling in this country that higher education... [has] become a private benefit, not a public good. Increasingly, the campus is being viewed as a place where students get credentialed and faculty get tenured, while the overall work of the academy does not seem particularly relevant to the nation’s most pressing civic, social, economic, and moral problems” (p. 14).

Beginning in the 1970s and continuing in many colleges and universities today, there has been a realignment of priorities away from teaching and service and toward research. The phrase *publish or perish* is recognized inside and outside of the academy, and the intense focus on research—especially basic research that does not appear to have any immediate applicability—has been the subject of stinging criticism from some higher education leaders. Zelda Gamson (1997) wrote: “We need to get over the traditional research culture that has sapped the vitality of most of our colleges and universities by drawing faculty away from commitment to their institutions and communities. The denigration of applied research and problem-solving has further eroded higher education’s connection to the world” (p. 13). More recently, Richard Battistoni and his colleagues (2003) said: “Academic institutions have been engaged in what has been called ‘mission creep’—the unending desire to improve the status of the institution by moving up the Carnegie ladder.... The path to excellence is obvious: get the big-ticket federal grants that will let you hire adjuncts and teaching assistants to take over undergraduate teaching, and leave the work of the university to those who can’t do cutting-edge scholarship” (p. 14).

Implicit in these criticisms is the need for colleges and universities to be more involved in serving their local communities. Those quoted in the preceding paragraphs, as well as numerous other higher education leaders, have noted the importance of service to society. (See, for example, Boyte & Hollander, 1999; Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities, 1999; and various articles in Kezar, Chambers, & Burkhardt, 2005.)

## POLITICAL REALITIES

Legislators have made it clear that higher education must be accountable, and being accountable relates to holding costs down,

providing quality education, producing more graduates, and serving the community. Legislators hear their constituents' complaints about the cost of higher education, and they frequently have little sympathy with the colleges' and universities' requests for more funds. As one legislator said at a statewide conference in 2008: "Universities have to pay more attention to what the policymakers want." His comment reflected his belief that universities are not responsive to community needs; they are not having a tangible impact on state and community problems.

Like the general public, an increasing number of legislators see higher education as a private more than a public benefit, and so they are willing to shift funding responsibility from the state to the individual students: between 1980 and 2008, the student's share of higher education funding increased from 20% to 36% (State Higher Education Executive Officers, 2008). When legislators see colleges and universities contributing to their communities—especially in the areas of economic development and the improvement of K–12 education—they might be more likely to support higher education.

With financial pressures on all levels of government, colleges and universities are sure to confront additional budgetary challenges. For example, local jurisdictions, such as Ann Arbor, Michigan; Durham, North Carolina; and Princeton, New Jersey, are asking their locally based, tax-exempt universities to make voluntary financial contributions to the community (Goodnough, 2009). Some communities are asking universities to pay for fire protection. In 2009, the mayors of Providence, Rhode Island, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, both suggested that college students in their cities be taxed because they use city services (Marcelo, 2009; Moore, 2009). It may be possible to stem this tide if local jurisdictions find their colleges and universities bring significant benefits to the community.

## WHO IS DRIVING ENGAGEMENT?

Throughout the past decade, a variety of organizations have been urging colleges and universities to respond to the needs of their communities and to strengthen undergraduate and graduate education by involving students with the community. Among the

drivers of this movement is the growing number of university presidents who see engagement as serving the public interest as well as their institutional self-interest and the educational interests of their students. The presidents' promotion of engagement has been reinforced by many others.

### HIGHER EDUCATION AND DISCIPLINARY ASSOCIATIONS

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U—1,200 institutions), AASCU (430 institutions), the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU, formerly the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges—215 institutions), and Campus Compact (more than 1,100 college and university presidents) are among the higher education organizations actively working to encourage their members to become more engaged with their communities and to ensure that their students are developing the civic skills needed for active participation in a democratic society.

AAC&U's web page on "civic engagement" begins with the statement: "Civic engagement has become an essential learning goal for institutions throughout higher education" ([www.aacu.org](http://www.aacu.org)). AAC&U's focus is on developing "effective global and local citizens," and most of the approaches it suggests involve students directly in the community in activities that meet the definition of public engagement. AASCU encouraged institutional engagement with their communities in 2002 when it published *Stepping Forward as Stewards of Place*. AASCU's American Democracy Project, started in 2003, focuses on students' civic engagement, and now includes 230 colleges and universities ([www.aascu.org](http://www.aascu.org)). APLU's website includes a special tab for "university engagement," which links to several items related to public engagement ([www.aplu.org](http://www.aplu.org)). Campus Compact focuses on students' civic engagement: "Campus Compact promotes public and community service that develops students' citizenship skills, helps campuses forge effective community partnerships, and provides resources and training for faculty seeking to integrate civic and community-based learning into the curriculum" ([www.compact.org](http://www.compact.org)). These are by no means the only higher education associations promoting engagement, but they are among the largest. Their websites contain



information useful to those who wish to expand their students' civic engagement.

Given that faculty often feel a closer affiliation to their discipline than they do to their institution, the disciplinary associations that encourage public engagement can have a powerful impact on the behavior of faculty. Because public engagement is one of many priorities for the disciplines, it is not as prominent on disciplinary websites as it is on the websites of higher education associations.

#### THE CARNEGIE FOUNDATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF TEACHING

In 2006, in an effort to recognize those institutions that were performing well and simultaneously encourage more public engagement on the part of all colleges and universities (Driscoll, 2008), The Carnegie Foundation added an elective classification system focused on "curricular engagement," and "outreach and partnerships." The creation of the elective classification sent a clear message that public engagement is neither a passing fad nor unique to a particular college or university. Rather it is highly valued and worthy of recognition in higher education.

#### ACCREDITING AGENCIES

Responsible for accrediting colleges and universities in 19 states, the Higher Learning Commission is the largest of the regional accrediting associations, making it a very powerful influence on higher education. Its revised accreditation criteria, effective in 2005, included a new standard, "Criterion 5: Engagement and Service." The criterion states: "As called for by its mission, the organization identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value" (Higher Learning Commission, 2003, 3.1–6). The criterion is followed by four core components, each of which is accompanied by five to six examples that make it clear that the commission requires students, faculty, and staff at institutions it accredits to engage with their communities. As an example, Core Component 5b states: "The organization has the capacity and the commitment to engage with its identified constituencies and

communities,” and one of the examples is: “The organization’s educational programs connect students with external communities” (Higher Learning Commission, 2003, 3.1–6).

### STATEWIDE ENTITIES

Colleges and universities, particularly publicly supported institutions, are likely to be encouraged by their legislators and their higher education boards to increase their engagement with the region and help them with the major challenges they face. In Kentucky, there is actually a *public agenda* for higher education. The heart of the agenda is a set of five questions, one of which asks: “Are Kentucky’s people, communities, and economy benefiting?” Encouragement may go even further to include a requirement for accountability measures or the allocation of special funding for engagement work. In 2006, the Kentucky legislature created a special fund—the Regional Stewardship Trust Fund—which provided significant funding for the state’s comprehensive universities to work with their communities to ameliorate local problems and advance the public agenda. The matter of public policy support for engagement and details about Kentucky’s Regional Stewardship Trust Fund are discussed in Chapter 12.

### ENGAGED FACULTY, STUDENTS, AND COMMUNITIES

Faculty and students who are involved with the community are often among the strongest advocates for expanding public engagement. They experience the benefits. For example, students value experiences that let them apply what they learn to the “real world,” especially when they feel it will make them more competitive in the job market. Those who have a positive service learning experience or who have discovered the value of CBR will push for more such learning opportunities. Similarly, community leaders and community organizations that have positive experiences with their local colleges and universities encourage more of this work. Community needs are vast, and when colleges and universities help address those needs, communities will push for more and more linkages.

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Public engagement represents the convergence of public interest and institutional self-interest. Benefits clearly accrue to the communities that partner with their local colleges and universities, but benefits also accrue to the institution, the students, and the faculty.

### INSTITUTIONAL BENEFITS

Strong and effective public engagement activities provide evidence that the university is fulfilling its commitment to the public good and to its own mission. Compelling stories emerge from the public engagement activities, and these fuel public relations efforts that can lead to improved alumni and community relations and significantly impact revenue streams. A positive image can lead to more contracts with public and private entities and more donors willing to invest in the institution. For public colleges and universities, a positive image can lead to greater legislative support and increased appropriations. David Weerts and Lorilee Sandmann (2008) reported that a commitment to increased public engagement “was associated with increased levels of state appropriations for public research universities during the 1990s” (p. 100). Even earmarks should be easier to obtain when the university is seen as strongly engaged with the region.

A reputation for extensive public engagement helps student recruitment. As the University of Pennsylvania discovered, its public engagement “became a competitive advantage in the recruitment of different types of students, those who were turned on by the ideas and passion this commitment represented” (Rodin, 2007, p. 18).

Urban universities have a vested interest in maintaining (or creating) a local quality of life that supports the institution. Yet many of those institutions are located in areas where there are boarded-up buildings, drug rings, high crime, gangs, dilapidated housing, and underperforming K–12 schools. Universities that successfully partner with their neighborhood community to remedy these problems benefit in multiple ways. Among other things, they create a safer, more attractive neighborhood,

which helps to attract and retain high-performing faculty and students.

The university benefits in other ways. When an institution is contributing to the community, business and community leaders are likely to advocate on its behalf. The community and university are likely to work together to develop strategic plans that are aligned with each other. Local expertise will be available to advise the university on program development. New grant opportunities are possible. The university is modeling good citizenship. Overall, the benefits to the institution are extensive and the risks are minimal, as long as the public engagement activities are implemented with integrity and the cautions described in this book are heeded.

#### STUDENT BENEFITS

Students derive significant benefits from taking part in volunteerism, service learning, and CBR. Janet Eyler and Dwight Giles (1999) observed: “The learning we saw in our service learning students was deeper than merely acquiring and spitting back a series of facts about a subject; it engaged our students’ hearts as well as their heads and helped them understand the complexity of what they were studying” (p. xiv). This alone provides ample reason to engage students in the community as part of their college experience.

A review of the literature by Anthony Antonio, Helen Astin, and Christine Cress (2000) revealed that student engagement is “positively associated with persistence in college, interest in graduate study, the development of leadership skills, and commitment to racial understanding . . . higher grades . . . greater knowledge of subject matter . . . greater ability to apply course concepts to new situations . . . strengthened critical thinking skills . . . civic responsibility (increased commitment to serving the community, interest in influencing the political structure, engaging in future volunteer work, and helping others in difficulty) . . . [and] positively associated with student assessments of the relevance of their coursework to everyday life” (pp. 374–375). Not all students benefit to the same degree, however, and not all impact studies report the same results, at least partially because the quality of

the student's experience affects its impact on the student (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Other benefits that at least some students are likely to derive include an appreciation of ethical issues that affect the world of practice; a better sense of self, increased self-confidence, and a clearer understanding of how to make a difference in one's community; and improved career readiness as a result of applied experiences, a better understanding of what those in the field really do, a stronger resume, some good networking connections, and a better understanding of the community and the problems it faces.

### FACULTY BENEFITS

Engagement with the community benefits teaching. It influences what faculty choose to emphasize in the classroom, helps faculty remain current and keep course content up to date, reminds faculty of the relationship between what they are teaching and the real world, provides powerful examples for use in the classroom, and generally energizes faculty and enriches their teaching.

Likewise, engagement benefits faculty research. It provides new ideas for research, encourages and values all four forms of scholarship advocated by Boyer, allows testing of theories, provides access to research sites and research data that would not otherwise be available, opens up new grant possibilities, and provides opportunities for multidisciplinary and multiuniversity research. Overall, engagement invigorates the research enterprise by providing the faculty with new challenges and new opportunities.

Engagement provides faculty with many new sources of satisfaction: confronting a new challenge, using their expertise to make a real difference in the world, and testing how their theories translate into action. The faculty reduce their intellectual isolation and acquire new colleagues from their own university, from other universities, and from the community at large. Working with the community may increase consulting opportunities. Interestingly, "studies show that faculty who engage in significant consultation also score higher in the number of funded research projects, in the number of professional peer-reviewed publications, and in student evaluations of their teaching, than those who do not" (Patton & Marver as reported in Checkoway, 2001, p. 136).

The extensive benefits to faculty can lead a complacent faculty member to become energized and enthusiastic, strengthening his teaching, scholarship, service, and overall performance.

### COMMUNITY BENEFITS

A project or program implemented as part of a university-community partnership should produce direct benefits for the community. However, communities derive many additional, sometimes less obvious benefits from partnering with a university. These include access to faculty expertise that can be an unbiased, trusted voice (Fogelman, 2002); access to an expanded resource base including grant opportunities and the university's physical, financial, and human resources; added credibility for jointly produced work (for example, grants, evaluation reports, and project proposals); the satisfaction of working with students; new ideas and new learning as a result of working with faculty, students, and other members of the community (Leiderman, Furco, Zapf, & Goss, 2003); access to an organization that has the capacity to convene, to bring together groups that are in conflict; and often, an opportunity to influence the university's direction and programs.

### CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Given the abundant opportunities for university-community partnerships and the diverse benefits that accrue to all involved, many colleges and universities have become at least somewhat engaged with their communities. However, much of this work is person-dependent rather than an integral part of the fabric of the institution (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2002). Unfortunately, this means that engagement holds a tenuous position in the institution; its future is anything but secure. The balance of this book shows how to embed this work deep into the fabric of institutions so that it becomes as much a part of higher education as teaching and research.