Scholarship in Action
Communities, Leaders, and Citizens

Edited by
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SCHOLARSHIP IN ACTION: COMMUNITIES, LEADERS, AND CITIZENS

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Foreword

Anne-Katrin Gramberg

Scholarship in Action: Communities, Leaders, and Citizens is the result of a coordinated team effort over the past seven years within the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) at Auburn University in Alabama. The ten essays represent a journey that began with the simple but important idea that, as a land grant institution, we have a responsibility to revisit our commitment to the communities that sustain us. Our story as expressed in this collection illustrates the success that can be achieved when administrative cooperation meets creative scholarship in the service of common good.

Our journey began in 2006, one day on my regular commute to my office on Auburn’s campus, when I heard a news story on National Public Radio about one commentator’s perception that a lack of educated citizenry was stymying Alabama’s progress. As I pondered the commentary, I became impassioned with the mission to engage the programs within our college in a reciprocal relationship of knowledge building with our community. As soon as I arrived on campus, I invited a group of CLA partners to my office to initiate a task force whose objective would be to design realistic means to bring our students and faculty in touch with our community constituents and create a culture of shared knowledge.

By 2007, the task force formally organized into the Community and Civic Engagement Planning Committee and began frequent and rigorous meetings to formulate an action plan to bring the CLA’s expertise and resources in useful service toward addressing our collective civic challenges. The action plan led us to annual faculty trainings through the Community and Civic Engagement (CCE) Summer Academy; the establishment of the CCE minor; numerous opportunities for faculty and student engagement in interdisciplinary conferences and trainings; partnerships with national and regional organizations with similar missions; research and publication that weds teaching to outreach; the establishment of CCE learning communities, and incentives and recognition for students and faculty who successfully fulfill the mission of the CCE Initiative—to create and to implement academic programming that addresses our civic challenges. The accomplishments shared by our college and our community partners contributed
significantly to a university-wide awakening to this mission and ultimately to the university’s achievement of the Carnegie Foundation’s Community Engagement Classification and inclusion in the Talloires Network at Tufts University, an international association of institutions committed to strengthening the civic roles and social responsibilities of higher education.

The Community and Civic Engagement Initiative has been highly successful in uniting students, faculty, and members of our regional and national communities who are interested in putting our best minds and resources to work, together, toward the public good. The initiative, too, has helped faculty envision new connections between outreach and scholarship, and for many, it has opened new avenues of thought toward teaching, learning, and partnership.

As new faculty, students, and community cohorts join our effort, often they seek coherent models of our past experiences, the challenges and the successes. This collection serves to fill that need by providing an opportunity for faculty members to document through their own narrative voices the journey that putting scholarship into action has been. The collection covers myriad intersecting and reoccurring themes within engaged public scholarship such as global citizenship, leadership, new media and its implications for community building, diversity, volunteerism, fundraising, literacy, aging populations, health and disability, granting institutions, faith-based initiatives, and nonprofit organizations. As the lines that define what lies within and beyond a university’s borders become increasingly blurred, it becomes more apparent that these complicated and divergent issues are all of a piece that will make up the fabric of useful education that is accessible to all. It is our hope that those who share this mission will find within these pages the means to negotiate the complexities that we must inevitably embrace.
Introduction

Barbara A. Baker

Scholarship in Action: Communities, Leaders, and Citizens is the story of a process undertaken by a set of faculty members in the College of Liberal Arts at Auburn University in Alabama to build new pedagogical content through purposeful attention to, respect for, and reciprocity with the communities that sustain us. Underlying this effort are two assumptions: first, that the university has a responsibility to make itself useful in the alleviation of the civic challenges which face us all, and second, that traditional teaching strategies (such as lectures, readings, and writing assignments) alone are often not instructive enough in the face of these pressing and persistent challenges.

At the center of this story are students who will face these challenges, and in all likelihood, work within and, sometimes, lead the institutions, programs, and activities that will address this ongoing work. To that end, the professors/authors of the essays presented here designed and implemented courses and projects that immerse students in the communities beyond academe’s walls, intentionally providing experiences that engage students and citizens together in the learning processes described.

The projects share innovative approaches nurtured by forward-thinking administrative support, a critical combination for success in this transformational period in academic progress. At the direction of the dean of the College of Liberal Arts, directors of three programs within the college reached out within their units to create dialog among the Community and Civic Engagement Initiative, the Women’s Leadership Institute, and the Masters of Public Administration Program in an effort to broaden and blend conversations with current scholarship across and within the arts, humanities, and social science disciplines.

As contributors fashioned their experiences into the essays here, they sought to address as their audience other faculty members who undertake or hope to undertake publicly engaged scholarship, administrators who will work with these faculty members toward the benefit of the university, as well as community members who seek the university as a partner in their efforts. It is our hope that the book will provide a basis for curricular development and research around the
concepts of public scholarship and civic professionalism. The main goals are to address the reciprocal nature of these kinds of projects and the knowledge that is created through this reciprocity, and to illustrate how publically engaged projects can be fitted into academic criteria that will be mutually beneficial to those inside and outside of the university. We have proceeded with the belief that what is “inside” and what is “outside” make up, in fact, the world itself, and so have grounded our work in the world which we and our students inhabit.

Our journey begins with “Preparing and Engaging the New Citizens of the World,” in which Kelsey and Summerfield argue that “it is an imperative” for students to understand the world beyond their own locale and nation. The projects that they describe set out to provide students with personal international experiences in interdisciplinary and cross-cultural collaboration that promote universal justice, peace, and cultural appreciation. The imperative they describe is central to the mission of the College of Liberal Arts which is to foster an “understanding of the human condition, a respect for individual and cultural differences, and a desire for the free exchange of ideas.” To accomplish this mission, Kelsey and Summerfield argue that students must “step away from the comfort of assured truths, from the comfort of being surrounded by people who share one’s convictions, passions, background, and life experiences.”

In “Women and Leadership in the Social Era,” Barbara A. Baker builds on this concept through a discussion of civic engagement projects geared toward the infinite reach of new media. The democratic and collaborative nature of these new media projects relies on creative participation and the expansive potential of technologically-driven community formation. Baker argues that the feminine and collaborative new media projects of the Women’s Leadership Institute present the possibility “to more equitably distribute power . . . and allow for the co-creation of value among students and the communities that their projects serve.”

Similarly, in “Changing Shoes for Social Change,” Heather May considers the value that, through unique performances, student actors create in collaboration with the diverse communities they seek to explore and to understand. May describes the inception of the student and community-based Mosaic Theatre Company and the value creation fostered through diversity programming as a method of scholarship both “in” and “of” community. May guides the company toward forward-thinking educational outcomes geared to immerse students in the realities of an increasingly multicultural US population, and by honoring a diversity of experiences and points of view.

Barbara Bondy’s “Volunteering in the Arts” also considers the future of the student and advocates, through volunteerism, for “a subtle shift in students’ mindsets” so that they might uncover latent abilities that allow them “to push the threshold of potential for a future professionalism.” An application of the skills necessary for successful volunteerism in local nonprofit organizations (NPOs) often leads to the honing of job-ready skills in the workforce.

Similarly, working with local NPOs has the potential to provide students with an opportunity to take an in-depth look at the ins and outs of fundraising, which as Cathleen O. Erwin shows in “A Role for the Universities in Building Fundraising Capacity in Nonprofit Organizations,” is becoming an increasingly competitive and necessary element for institutions that will provide future
employment. The needs of the successful NPO mirror a skillset that students can be usefully trained to negotiate, and Erwin illustrates the process of incorporating fundraising principles into classroom strategies, purposefully turning university-level learning out to the public sphere.

Tricia Serviss, in “The Emergent Times of the Community Writing Center of Auburn,” locates the public turn in rhetoric and composition studies in community-based writing centers. Her development of Auburn’s Community Writing Center, described here, fosters a writing culture on and off campus that acknowledges that writing instruction has consequences well beyond the classroom. Serviss argues that writing is important to the daily lives of citizens and that writing-based learning is unique to individual communities. Her efforts bring Auburn University’s “educational infrastructures to bear on everyday writing.”

“Expressions of a BraveHeart” also describes a project that brings educational infrastructure to bear on everyday life. In this case, Burque, Werner, and Ware discuss a program that takes as its centerpiece a very specific community—teens and young adults with moderate to severe disabilities. Burque et al developed BraveHearts to bring students enrolled in social work programs into direct contact with this community to help fill developmental gaps, providing disabled youths with consistent, structured activities that allow for the development and reinforcement of friendships, personal interests, and a sense of belonging. In return, the social work students gain from their participation a new level of comfort and sensitivity to disabled people, the ability to communicate more effectively with others, and skills in advocacy and policy on behalf of a community outside the classroom.

Jana Gutiérrez and Gilda Socarrás also enhance student skillsets and achieve curricular goals by fulfilling specific community needs. Their case studies in Spanish language learning and Hispanic culture illustrate the transformational nature of community-based education for students, faculty, and community partners. The pedagogical content of their programs emerged as students came to see themselves as members of communities that they, in fact, had helped to create—communities that existed in a space that eliminated borders separating the university campus from the rest of the world. Their interactions with Latinos and older adults help students become active learners immersed as change agents and intermediaries.

Mitchell Brown’s “Cross-Integration of Community, Research, and the Classroom,” describes a deliberate and specific project in which graduate students were integrated into practical policy design and implementation, research, measurement, and data analysis. Her work with the Rural Pilot Program afforded students the opportunity to create logic models, design studies, analyze data, and write mock grant proposals, illustrating the way that scholar-teachers can assist students in producing knowledge at the same time they experience the complexities of the larger society of which the university is a part. Brown’s project is a good example of teaching civic professionalism in that classroom instruction is geared to sharpen students’ skillsets in the same arenas in which community members act as “professional” citizens.

In “Defining Best Practices” Kathleen Hale and Ryan Hankins imagine and begin the process of building a new architecture that meets the needs of NPOs and universities at the same time it allows for the co-creation of knowledge, scholarship, and creative work. They argue that “nonprofit organizations provide
fertile ground for engaged scholarship across the range of applied research, service learning projects, internships, community capacity building and civic professionalism.” By extension, then, reciprocal influence flows between external organizations that govern NPOs and nonprofit educators who shape curricular requirements and course work. Through a series of open-ended questions in semi-structured interviews, Hale and Hankins conclude that “community can—and must—serve as an equal partner with faculty in determining the knowledge and skills that are important for universities to impart in this arena, which is the community itself.”

At a pivotal moment in higher education, the essays here address the urgency of bringing voices inside and outside the university together in a conversation about our shared future—a future that presents complex and interconnected challenges hastened by unprecedented technological advances and daunting economic perplexities. Although the professors/authors have fashioned different experiments resulting in varied experiences, the resounding conclusion of their work is that our scholarship and our teaching is strengthened by its public relevance at the same time that our shared public sphere needs and deserves the academic resources that we bring to bear on our futures.
Chapter 1: Preparing and Engaging the New Citizens of the World

Kisha Kelsey and Giovanna Summerfield

The challenges of the global community are impossible to ignore as the economy, technology, and changing demographics mandate adequate preparation to be a successful citizen, employee, and leader of not just one’s locality or nation, but of the world. Becoming a citizen of the world is not an option—it is an imperative. In *The World is Flat*, Thomas Friedman describes how it is now possible, “for more people than ever to collaborate and compete in real time with more other people on more different kinds of work from more different corners of the planet... using computers, email, networks, teleconferencing, and dynamic software” (2005). Physical mobility also continues to expand according to new data from the Census Bureau, which shows that the United States’ immigrant population reached 40 million in 2010, the highest number in American history; nearly 14 million new immigrants settled in the country from 2000 to 2010 (Camarota, 2011). This interconnectedness requires that we approach the education of the newest generation of college students in an innovative manner. For higher education to succeed in preparing new professionals, students must be equipped to function and thrive in a global community. Solving our current problems requires international cooperation among governments and professional organizations that partake in global knowledge and engagement, as well as informed advocacy (Hovland, 2005).

In the past decade, higher education’s interest in internationalization has intensified in response to the globalization of culture and community. Concurrently, the focus of civic education has broadened from national to global, supporting the concept that civic responsibility extends beyond national borders. In January 2012, *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy’s Future*, was released by the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement under the leadership of the Global Perspective Institute and American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). The US Department of Education invited the report in response to the need to “assess the
state of education for democracy and produce a paper…through which multiple stakeholders could significantly increase democratic participation and the number of informed, engaged, and globally knowledgeable civic participants” (2012). A Crucible Moment documents the nation’s anemic civic health and includes recommendations for action that address a new vision for civic learning in higher education to fit the demands of our youth. This generation, according to national pollster John Zogby, is more eager to travel physically and virtually, is putting less emphasis on material ownership, and is placing more interest and stress on public service (Sanders, 2012). This transformation from the original tenets of the American dream leads Zogby to thus label this new generation as the “first globals.” In response to the changing views of youth towards the world, the National Task Force thus urges, among other things, to advance a contemporary, comprehensive framework for civic learning that embraces US and global interdependence and to expand the number of solid civic partnerships locally, nationally, and globally.

Though the concept of global citizenship dates back to ancient Greece, this term seems to have acquired new currency, linked now to educational objectives at the university level to shape and nurture our new academic audience. In their mission statements, colleges and universities are increasingly linking definitions of high-quality education to the ability of their graduates to act as global citizens and leaders; they cite global citizenship as an outcome of liberal education and internationalization efforts. Organizations like the AAC&U and Imagining America endorse the idea of engagement beyond localities as relevant to the current situation of higher education. We must question the identity of community as “local” in today’s technological, interconnected world and underscore the fact that education towards global citizenship must be addressed to produce graduates who are ready to contribute to society. As Hakan Altinay puts it, “a university education which does not provide effective tools and forums for students to think through their responsibilities and rights as one of the several billions on planet Earth, and along the way develop their moral compass, would be a failure” (2010).

Our institution, Auburn University, has made the internationalization of programming efforts a priority. Each year, the Office of International Students and Scholars welcomes over 900 students and 100 scholars from more than 90 nations around the world. During the 2011–2012 academic year, over 1,100 students participated in Auburn Abroad experiences. Auburn University also offers many diverse curricula such as Women’s Studies, Africana Studies, and Sustainability Studies. The College of Human Sciences provides minor options like Philanthropy and Non-profit Studies, International Studies, and Hunger Studies. Auburn University was even selected as a lead partner in the United Nation’s World Food Programme International War on Hunger campaign. In the College of Liberal Arts, the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures has a variety of minors, including Global Cultures. Minors in Community and Civic Engagement, Women’s Leadership, and Latin American Studies are also available to all students. It is the mission of the Auburn University College of Liberal Arts to:
Foster a community in which students, faculty, and administration have an understanding of the human condition, a respect for individual and cultural differences, and a desire for the free exchange of ideas. We emphasize integrity, inquiry, and civility for the sake of educated thoughtful citizenship (2013).

In 2010, a new Learning Community was added to the offerings available to students: Living in a Global Community. Learning communities provide freshmen at Auburn University with a foundation for their entire college career and an opportunity for greater success as they transition to adulthood. Each Learning Community consists of twenty-five students sharing common classes, thus creating a true physical community. The classes are focused around a central topic or theme and include a one-hour university course that uses discussions and projects to identify ways to successfully transition to college. The Living in a Global Community Learning Community provides students with resources to examine how they fit into a global community and prepares them to become engaged global citizens. Enrollment in foreign language or culture courses, such as Global Fluency and Awareness: Understanding Diversity through Languages, Literature, and Popular Culture, are highly recommended. The experience includes a main seminar that revolves around concepts of multiculturalism, diversity, identity, race, ethnicity, and gender. Class projects provide additional opportunities to work practically with international communities. Students are thus able to develop an understanding and appreciation of other cultures, their own, and the role and power of a community member engaged in collective work for the common good. The course objectives encourage students to:

- Examine key concepts like identity, nation, culture, diversity, race, ethnicity, otherness, stereotypes, and community.
- Investigate specific activities, roles, and phenomena pertaining to gender, race, and class in America.
- Link contemporary multicultural experiences with historical roots and contributions.
- Develop an understanding and appreciation of their culture and the cultures of others.
- Develop identity as a community member and the power of individual and collective work.

Throughout the semester, students are able to connect, via Skype or classroom sessions, with students and faculty from European and Asian cultures. The global perspective they gain through direct contact is invaluable to preparing them to be future global citizens.

Stemming out of the idea and the success of the global learning community, in 2011 the College of Liberal Arts launched its Global Citizenship Project (GCP). The goal of the GCP is to promote universal justice, peace, and culture appreciation through cross-cultural collaboration and personal engagement. Students should be challenged to make the world a better place through educational curricula, leadership activities, and hands-on experiences. For faculty
and students interested in global issues, this program offers the GCP book club, the International Voice Series, international internships for undergraduate and graduate students, and faculty-student retreats in environments that teach them about their “glocal” (global-local) context and provide opportunities for sustainable community partnerships.

**GCP Book Club**

The first component of the GCP to be implemented was the book club. Now in its second year, this club has brought together students and faculty of vastly different ethnicities and cultures to learn about and from one another in ways not possible in traditional classroom settings. A small multicultural committee selects the texts each semester, seeking out pertinent books that can provide personal life stories with an international scope and can testify to the challenges and rewards of a diverse background. The first book used was Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Namesake*, a poignant story about loss and self-worth within unfamiliar physical and emotional spaces. Jean Giovanetti’s *One Asian Eye* was the second GCP book, in which Giovanetti shares her struggles living as a bi-racial youth coming of age in a 1970s Midwestern community. The next novel, Beppe Severgnini’s *Ciao, America!* humorously depicts a one-year long stay in America from the perspective of an Italian journalist and his wife.

These novels exposed students to the vicissitudes of the protagonists as they matured or adapted to diverse contexts while being exposed to international concepts. A central tenet to the book club includes reaching out to pertinent departments and their faculty, who then present this opportunity to their students as a supplementary activity to their course offerings. By specifically including ESL (English as a Second Language) students, our book club meetings have become a virtual melting pot of ages, ethnicities, cultures, and academic disciplines. Typically, only half the discussion participants are American students. Our American students learn about other cultures, in addition to becoming aware of how individuals from those cultures view America. Imagine the interaction as three students—Iraqi, Chinese, and American—discuss the similarities and differences in their everyday lives. These are the experiences that tomorrow’s global citizens need as part of their education.

**International Voices Series**

Our students have the opportunity to be exposed to other international inputs via the International Voices Series that, in the 2011-2012 academic year, included the National Italian American Film Fest, a Francophone Film Festival, and a Latin American Film Series on immigration issues. The series also drew speakers who boast scholarship on international issues, such as healthy food consumption, world peace, and women’s rights. These film fests have been repeated and participation from students, faculty, and the community has increased. Some of the speakers have been relevant to different courses and/or campus projects, as well as conducive to international and interdisciplinary collaborations.
International Internships

Beginning with summer 2012, the GCP created new opportunities available to all College of Liberal Arts students interested in international service-learning or internships. Working with CAPA International Education, students have the chance to live, learn, and intern in London, England, Beijing, China, or Buenos Aires, Argentina. Our first cohort of students in London was placed with local organizations such as Disability Action in the Borough of Barnet, the Royal Automobile Club at Woodcote Park, the Children’s Society, and the Kingston Green Radio. Our student in China worked with the Great Wall Club in Beijing, and after graduating he returned as a paid employee.

Our students’ stories were published on our website and shared with the dean’s advisory board, the Community and Civic Engagement advisory board, and at study abroad and career fairs for students interested in working with international communities. We are continuing to extend a helping hand to all thirteen CLA departments, in their study abroad programs to create lasting employable skills on the global stage.

Global Citizenship Project Retreat

Fostering the idea of citizenship in a global context involves raising the level of awareness of everyone on campus. Demands of time and money can make international travel difficult for many students and faculty. As Karin Fischer underscores, there are alternatives, often cheaper and easier to fit into the academic and personal schedules of our students, if only we look at what is around us (2012). With this in mind, the idea of the GCP Retreat (GCPR) was conceived to facilitate the possibility of providing a global experience in a local setting.

The goals of the retreat were developed out of the overall mission of the GCP. We wanted to provide personal engagement with international communities, encourage awareness of global experiences at the local level, foster interdisciplinary and cross-cultural collaboration, and promote cultural and educational experiences available to students and faculty. The initial step in advancing the CGPR was to select the location for the first venture. Opportunities for glocal experiences are not always immediately apparent, especially when confronted with a community that in general is not the birthplace of any of the faculty and staff involved in the selection. We relied on native faculty members for suggestions, and one recommended Bayou La Batre, an Alabama town with a one-third Asian population, either immigrant or first-generation American. Research into the area provided a wealth of knowledge about the dominant seafood industry and its draw for Asian refugees in the late 1970s. Then, in the 2000s, Hurricane Katrina and the BP Oil Spill ravaged the region. Bayou La Batre was a prime example of a multi-cultural community that could be beneficial to the global awareness of our faculty and students without leaving the state.

The retreat began with a tour of the Gulf Coast Seafood Waste Treatment Cooperative. Bayou La Batre is dependent on the shrimp industry for survival, and the upheaval from Hurricane Katrina and the BP Oil Spill had devastating
effects on the community. As one of only three in the nation, the seafood waste treatment plant was an example of how the area was searching for new ways to capitalize on the existing industry. From the plant, we drove to the origin of the waste we saw processed—a seafood picking house. On the drive into Bayou La Batre the multicultural identity of the area was apparent as we passed a Vietnamese temple and store, nestled among traditional American storefronts, but at the seafood picking house all of the workers were Asian and barely spoke English. They were welcoming and allowed us to see the process of an industry and culture we knew little about.

The rest of the first day was spent with an organization known as Boat People SOS. Their mission is, “to empower, organize, and equip Vietnamese individuals and communities in their pursuit of liberty and dignity” (2011). They provide services for seniors and local children, translation, and disaster relief in the community. With their assistance, we were able to take a tour of the town, including the Asian neighborhoods, meet with their clientele and learn about the services they enjoy, learn about the past and present of the agency and its staff, and the work that lies ahead. The work they did with the community provided a deep insight into the still visible divide between the two worlds.

Day two of the retreat involved a visit to the local middle and high schools, where two teachers had developed a program entitled “Merging of Cultures” that highlighted the multicultural community through photography and film. An Auburn University extension specialist in the area also took the participants to an oyster farm and discussed ways they were trying to help the local community pursue new opportunities in the familiar industry of the area. Visits to the local docks and a Thai restaurant completed our glocal experience.

The actual retreat was preceded by a pre-retreat meeting that introduced participants to the context and culture of the community to be visited. Afterwards, participants shared their experiences and presented an informational video to other interested faculty members as part of the CLA Engaged Scholars. Pre- and post-surveys were also used as means of assessment, and follow-ups will continue in the future.

The most impactful part of the retreat is the sustainable partnerships that developed. While in Bayou La Batre, connections were made with many individuals and multiple collaborations have ensued. Members of Boat People SOS have Skyped in to talk with two Learning Community classes about their work and engagement. Middle school students from Bayou La Batre have made the trip to Auburn to experience the culture of a college campus, which is something foreign to them. Regardless of the disciplines of the participants, everyone who attended the retreat took something away that was applicable to themselves, their research, their discipline, or their teaching.

The second Global Citizenship Project Retreat took place in Sylacauga, Alabama, in April 2013. One administrator learned about a festival several years ago after receiving an invitation because of her Italian background. The community of Sylacauga hosts a Magic of Marble Festival, where Italian and national sculptors come together for two weeks to work on free-of-charge Alabamian marble slabs. Sylacauga is the sister city of Pietrasanta, Italy, a community that shares an economy centered on marble quarries. Whereas the first
retreat attracted social science and language faculty and students, the second one appealed to fine arts, history, and language scholars.

Continuous updating of knowledge about glocal issues and communities is necessary to select the best locations for each GCPR. Administrators and faculty in Foreign Language Departments or Humanities Centers are sometimes already in contact with these “hidden” communities. We learned that reliance on the expertise of peers and focus on students’ interests and needs are crucial to make these visits enriching and meaningful.

The Future of the GCP

As Robert Hollister remarks, there is a general tendency in our American institutions of higher education:

to approach global citizenship with an exclusive focus on the development of U.S. students. We should strive to strengthen education for global citizenship in our individual schools, but do so in ways that contribute to, and are informed, by the civic initiatives of sister institutions in all parts of the world (2012).

In the spirit of these noble goals, we have explored new avenues for our future. We have joined the Talloires Network, a global coalition of engaged universities, with 247 members in sixty-two countries and a combined enrollment of over six million students. We have also started exchange programs with universities in Italy and France, which will encourage collaborative research, pedagogical projects, and opportunities for both American and European students to study in and about each other’s country and institution. Through our civic engagement activities, we are working on strengthening our alumni network. There are Auburn University alumni in every part of the world who would like to contribute to our programs and connect with our students.

The GCP book club, International Voices Series, and GCPR will continue to be offered every year, built around opportunities and experiences that enrich the professional and personal paths of students and faculty at Auburn University. For example, the GCP will support a Mediterranean Studies working group which will offer theme-oriented faculty workshops that will add multicultural insights to the College of Liberal Arts curriculum. A course entitled “East meets West: Sicily, A Case Study at the Crossroads” has been awarded a university grant for its topic and for its innovative way of connecting our local campus with an international campus and will be open to undergraduate and graduate students in spring 2014. All of the GCP’s components will continue to foster global knowledge by offering Learning Communities and seminars focused on awareness of global concerns and by hosting events that recognize the impact of global issues and cross-cultural appreciation on our lives.

Becoming citizens of the world demands that students step away from the comfort of assured truths, from the comfort of being surrounded by people who share one’s convictions, passions, background, and life experiences. This transformation entails questioning of convention, personal initiative, adaptability,
and self-assessment. In *Cultivating Humanity a Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* Martha Nussbaum, a guru of global citizenry, argues that as campuses are producing citizens, it is imperative to ask what a good citizen of the present day should be and should know (1998). It is indeed endemic in the curriculum of our liberal education, as exemplified in the Auburn University College of Liberal Arts’ mission statement. We must hire and nurture staff and faculty who can prepare just, engaged, respectful citizens of the world. We feel that the GCP and its various components provide useful and effective tools to promote such glocal education and to train and mentor faculty and students alike.
Chapter 2: Women and Leadership in the Social Era: Engaging Community through New Media

Barbara A. Baker

Auburn University’s Women’s Leadership Institute has reshaped its teaching methodology to inspire community engaged learning through democratic and collaborative new media projects that rely on creative participation and community formation. The Institute seeks to apply twenty-first century social era and post-heroic leadership concepts to social media-based civic engagement projects that illustrate a feminine and relational means of engaging community. The purpose of the projects is to more equitably distribute power among the participants and allow for the co-creation of value among students and the communities that their projects serve.

To begin, let us start at the end, or more precisely as Barbara Kellerman titles her most recent book, at The End of Leadership. According to Kellerman, leadership as it was known up to and throughout the 20th century is dead. Kellerman begins The End of Leadership with a brief romp through history that indicates the tearing apart and turning asunder of the notions of hierarchy that stood as the framework of traditional leadership. She shows that by the time of the Enlightenment, signs indicating the end of leadership were everywhere: both the American and French Revolutions, for example, were “transformational events in which followers came to the fore, while leaders came under attack” (xvii). In America, resistance came to be seen “as a virtue and obedience a vice” (14).

By the mid-1960s, Martin Luther King was shifting the power relationships between white and black Americans at the same time that Betty Friedan was empowering women. The powerless challenged the powerful through rights revolutions from campus protests, to anti-Vietnam War activists and on through the 1970s with advocacy for gay rights, disability rights, animal rights and so on until the balance of power between leaders and followers was upended (Kellerman xvii).
Leaders were under siege. The Kennedys and Martin Luther King were assassinated. Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon were forced out of politics, and “Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter lost their respective presidential elections” (Kellerman 21). Throughout the last decades of the twentieth century Americans not only lost faith in political leaders but also in corporate leaders; the Enron and WorldCom scandals are but two illustrations. The hierarchical principles of top-down corporate governance began to dissipate into “bottom-up” “corporate democracy” (Kellerman 22). As Kellerman concludes,

Once upon a time we simply obeyed orders issued by our superiors, our leaders and managers. Now we incline more to challenge them, emboldened to do so by the spread of democracy, by the rhetoric of empowerment, and by the practice of participation. The evidence of the decline in respect for authority is everywhere—and everywhere are leaders who labor to lead. The change is cultural and contextual. Norms are now such that followers demand more—and leaders succumb more often. (29)

We see this same upending of hierarchies daily, not only in politics and business but also within the family structure, which is no longer as hierarchical and authoritarian as it once was. As Vineet Mayar notes, parents now seem to want to be friends and mentors to their children—not authority figures. “Because of the ‘knowledge economy’ and changes in the ‘global IT landscape,’ it is critical that organizational structures, like the family structures they are said to mirror, adapt to the changing times (qtd. in Kellerman 43).

We also see this same upending of authority and hierarchy within the classroom. Those of us who teach find ourselves caught in a tidal wave of change. Everything related to instruction—from classroom etiquette to the way students perceive, grasp, store, and appreciate knowledge—has changed. To my mind, the main change is in the way that content, culture, and technology have reconfigured knowledge. I think of this as an epistemological curveball that asks us to reconsider the manner in which we pitch content if our students are to make contact with it. Since content deliverable as basic facts is easily accessible to all, there is no need to store it and little cause to appreciate it. The driving force behind the epistemological sea change is, of course, technology and its attendant abilities to provide ongoing conversations. Participation in these conversations has become the core of engagement. To appreciate knowledge, one must engage with it. Engagement with knowledge is coming to mean participating in its creation and enjoying ownership of its effect.

The good news regarding such an epistemological shift in learning and engagement is that, because it is technologically driven, it presents the opportunity to be democratic. Technology provides a platform on which all people, in principle, have an equal opportunity to participate in the creation of knowledge, as well as in leadership. Through this knowledge economy, leadership is most usefully shared as people collaborate on what actions need to be taken, and how.
If technology—or more specifically, social and new media platforms—in fact have created equitable and shared leadership possibilities, then leadership itself is becoming more collaborative and more relational. In practice, leadership is becoming more feminine, answering Marie C. Wilson’s call for an era of post-heroic leadership. In Closing the Leadership Gap: Add Women, Change Everything, published in 2004 and re-issued in 2007, Wilson, the founder of the White House Project, argues that we “need to move far, far away from” what she called “heroic leadership,” in which “one person is seen as the source of all change and good, leaving everyone else’s contribution largely invisible. According to Wilson, “We need what Joyce K. Fletcher of Simmons College terms ‘post-heroic’ leadership, whose mission is relational and collaborative (read female)” (113).

Today we find ourselves in a world of post-heroic leadership, not by means of moving more women into positions of power as Marie Wilson envisioned, but rather as a result of a sweeping cultural shift, which Nilofer Merchant has termed “the Social Era.” By “era” Merchant refers to an epoch or an age, such as the industrial age; so the cultural shift she defines has broad implications.

In a recent blog post titled “Traditional Strategy is Dead. Welcome to the Social Era,” Merchant distinguishes among the industrial era, the information age, and the social era by suggesting that we have moved through phases of valuing the institution itself, to valuing data that could aid the institution, into a new age of honoring the act of co-creating value. She writes that “the industrial era primarily honored the institution as a construct of creating value. The information age (inclusive of Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 phases) primarily honored the value that data could provide to institutional value creation. It allowed for greater efficiency to do the same things that were done in the industrial era. The social era honors the value creation starting with the single unit of a connected human.” In the past, an entity’s value may have come at the expense of humans, but in the Social Era, according to Merchant, seemingly disparate individuals can participate in the creation of value. This opens up the possibility of distributing power broadly and equitably. The relational, collaborative, and co-creative nature of Social Era power relies on characteristics traditionally attributed to feminine leadership qualities. Put another way, the Social Era allows us to value something that the heroic leadership of the past did not usually value in women—that is, the collaborative, cooperative, and relational nature of creation. Valuing co-creation of knowledge empowers women.

According to Barbara Kellerman, Americans who traditionally have not held “power, authority, and influence” now use “the Internet to defy, or at least circumvent, those who do” (62). However, this social media dispersion of power is not only useful for acts of defiance; it is similarly effective in cooperative community building and action. Where governments and institutions have failed repeatedly to address comprehensively the problems that collectively ail us, social and corporate entrepreneurs are using new social media tools to step in and fill needs (Kellerman 92). As an example, Kellerman quotes a New York Times Magazine in which Elizabeth Scharpf, founder of Sustainable Health Enterprises (SHE) is quoted as having said, “Why wait for governments or established charities to assist rape victims, orphans or impoverished women when you can
start an NGO [Non-Governmental Organization] in your basement and do it yourself? . . . It’s not only presidents and United Nations officials who can chip away at global challenges. Passionate individuals with great ideas can do the same, especially in the age of the Internet and social media” (qtd. in Kellerman 93).

Social media tools have opened up democratic forms of leadership through co-creation of value at the same time that epistemological shifts in the value of knowledge co-creation have affected learning. These fundamental shifts are occurring simultaneously at a moment in history when cultural and civic challenges abound, and students are often compelled to address them. For these reasons, Auburn University’s Women’s Leadership Institute has reshaped its teaching methodology to inspire community-engaged learning through democratic and collaborative new media projects.

The goal of our recent group project models—used in both our Women and Leadership for-credit 15 week course and as the centerpiece of our four-day National Education for Women (NEW) Leadership Residential Intensive Training Program—is to provide the experience of a feminine and relational means of engaging community that distributes power among the participants and allows for the co-creation of value among students and the communities that their projects serve.

The reshaped team projects for both the class and the intensive training move away from classic group-project protocol by reconsidering the nature of intellectual property. In both cases, students are asked to step away from old models of knowing, organizing, deciding, and owning intellectual property. Students are asked to co-create knowledge by coming up with the topic of their work together instead of relying on a presumed leader. The groups are organized by self-selection instead of by the instructor, and leadership of the group is determined as much by the ability to follow as to lead. Each member is asked to contribute her individual strength to the project even if, and especially in the case that, her strength is in the ability to follow. In deciding the theme, the action to be taken, and the means to take that action, students are asked to share democratically and relinquish the urge toward certainty, embracing the vulnerability inherent in the lack of certainty and control.

The pilot project was conducted in a traditional classroom setting. The class, Women and Leadership, is taught as part of the Community and Civic Engagement minor in the College of Liberal Arts. Made up of twenty women between 18 and 22 years old, the class undertook a fairly traditional study of classic leadership learning models, including exercises in personal mission statements, evaluations of personal strengths, passions, and values, teamwork, and a study of seminal texts in women’s leadership such as Marie C. Wilson’s Closing the Leadership Gap: Add Women, Change Everything. Once these foundations were set, students began self-selecting the members of the team with which they wanted to work and the civic or cultural challenge that their team would address.
The following are the directions for the team assignment:

- For this assignment you will select team members with whom you would like to work. You may work with one other person, or a group. Together you will determine a topic of pressing civic and/or community relevance to all of the members of your group.

- Once you have decided on a topic, you will begin an in-depth social media exploration of the topic. Explore the topic on Google, Facebook, StumbleUpon, Pinterest, Tumblr, Wordpress, and any other social media platform that you wish. Your goal is to become as informed as possible about who is discussing the topic, what they are saying, how they are saying it, and which means of participation in the conversation are most interesting to you.

- Next you will decide together which social media forum you would like to enter together as a group in order to make a public act of leadership and engagement. You may choose to blog, tweet, Facebook, YouTube, or you may select another media tool to make your public act. You will decide with your group and act as a group to make an action in a social media forum of your choice.

- For your presentation you will prepare a one page handout and make copies for the class. The handout should cover 1) how you came to your topic; 2) the most significant things you learned through searching the topic; 3) how you decided on a social media forum on which to speak; and 4) the process you went through to decide on the (speech) act and what the act is. During the presentation you will go to the computer to show us your public act(s) of leadership and persuade us to become interested in your project.

- Everyone in your group will receive the same grade. You will be graded on 1) your ability to cooperate as a team (respecting the leadership and followership within your group); 2) the depth of thought and exploration behind your topic choice; 3) the considerations involved in the social media outlet you have chosen; and 4) the effectiveness and response to your public social media voice.

The results of the pilot run of this assignment were stunning because they pointed to not only the end of leadership as Kellerman suggests, but the beginning of a new perspective on teaching, a means to embrace the not-knowing involved with teaching in the Social Era. As a university teacher for over twenty years, I had been in the habit of teaching by leading, but this social media project forced me to let go of the same knowingness that the assignment asked the students to relinquish. It required me to take a leap of faith.

First of all, I could not possibly know what issues of civic and community importance students would take enough interest in to conduct self-motivated and self-shaped public responses. Secondly, I am a non-native speaker of Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr—little more than a bystander in the social-media-driven world that most students inhabit. A student project that resulted from this assignment illustrates what I learned by embracing my condition of not-knowing
and not-leading, purposefully putting aside the basic assumption of all-knowingness that I thought my profession had always required.

A project called “Trend 31” was undertaken by two seniors in the pilot class. Student-S and Student-R both exhibited a few signs of senioritis as the class made its way through the more traditional parts of leadership study; they appeared a bit bored and certainly unmoved. Both separately expressed to me concerns that they were not sure that their personal religious leanings aligned them with the concepts of Women’s Leadership that I was espousing. Both seemed relieved when they learned that they could choose their own group and topic for the class project. They seemingly shared nothing with each other but their class status as seniors and their religious faith. Student-S was outspoken and articulate; Student-R was quiet and thoughtful. One seemed a natural leader, the other a follower. Their project, however, illustrated perfectly how social-era co-creation of value distributes power and extends it beyond the individual.

Team Trend 31, made up only of Student-S and Student-R, went far beyond the directions of choosing a single topic and publically engaging with it on a social media platform (as did all of the groups in the pilot class). I could not have anticipated that the students would simultaneously engage with a host of social media platforms to accomplish the assignment. Trend 31, for example, used a combination of Facebook, Twitter, Prezi, and YouTube. They expressed their mission on Facebook, saying that it was to empower women to reach out in their God-given potential. By connecting women to the outreach opportunities they are passionate about, we can change the world. Although certain causes can be halfway around the world, we understand that they are always close to your heart. Let us help you bridge the gap. There are needs in every community on this planet that are waiting to be tended to. Let us know where you’d like to work and what type of ministry you’re passionate about and we’ll do our best to find something for you. (Trend 31 Facebook)

After publishing their mission to Facebook, they immediately received over 1900 visits to their page, which they then connected to a Twitter account. As of this writing, the students are still tweeting through this account, beginning 2013 by reinvigorating their followers with a message reading, “The best way to start out the new year? Serving others! Let us help you get connected. Message us and we’ll get you started! #trend 31.”

To expand on their mission, its context and purpose, Team Trend 31 created a Prezi, which they posted to YouTube. Within the YouTube video, the team incorporated most of the leadership premises of the class, but they expanded far beyond them by co-creating a universally visible call to all women asking them to respond to their passions by putting them to work for others. The team offers to connect anyone with the work of community engagement she would like to do by scouring social media sites and providing recommendations for collaborative possibilities. To watch the video, visit http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UpluZQt3NjK.
This is a wildly ambitious project, and I am not advocating for its content or its scope. However, it usefully serves as an example of the extent to which our roles as leaders have been completely upended at the same time that our collaborative leadership potential is infinitely expanded by the Social Era. Whatever limitations Trend 31 may have, it equitably distributes power among all the community engagement sites that wish to participate in it. Those same partners have the potential to co-create whatever value they decide, and any person within range of the Internet can be a member of the community the project seeks to create.

I could not have anticipated that students would choose to incorporate their religious convictions into a social media project, nor could I have known how groups would use combinations of social media tools to create networked communities that are keyed to their own interests. But because the pilot assignment did not set limits that discouraged these possibilities, students willingly set out to undertake exponentially massive projects that have the potential to continue to grow in size and over time, long after the class is concluded. More importantly, the projects illustrated the possibility of students teaching those of us who are not fluent in the tools of social media what the next generation of leadership might actually look like. To me, it looks quite feminine in its collaborative, relational co-creative capacities.

Thus, it seemed quite logical to extend the classroom exercise and shift the team projects of our NEW Leadership Residential Intensive Training (RIT) into the Social Era as well. The Women’s Leadership Institute was one of the first members in the southeast to participate in the Center for American Women and Politics’ NEW Leadership Network. As such, the residential training had always focused specifically on a politically oriented team project, which typically involved asking pre-arranged teams to work together to write a bill and present it to members of the Alabama legislature. I had always been disappointed in our ability to keep students in the RIT interested in their topics once the training concluded; so I was eager to test a new model that had the built-in capacity to extend the relationships started in the training beyond the short period of time that the women stayed with us on campus.

We tested the Social Era model in the RIT in May 2012 when 30 college-aged women from all over the southeast came to Auburn for the program. I set out the following objectives for the team action project:

As a team you will exercise leadership and followership skills to create and move an action plan forward. Your action plan should 1) bring together the passions, values, and strengths of your team; 2) focus specifically on a realistic, doable objective on which you all agree; 3) initiate a real action through a social media outlet; and 4) bind your team together for future discussion and action.

Knowing that the students would only have four days to get to know each other and complete the action project, I offered the following as examples of possible actions that could realistically be undertaken: create a Facebook page; plant the seeds to start a nonprofit; create and distribute a YouTube video for advocacy;
write a newsletter and decide how to distribute it; create a public service announcement and decide how to distribute it; create a blog or engage with a preexisting blog, or be creative and come up with a combination of these items or something completely original.

Next I explained that the main objective of their team projects was to decide together in a democratic fashion on an action that needs to be taken and collaboratively devise a plan to take that action. I asked the students to begin by considering the rhetorical elements of their project: What is an important and realistic issue that you agree needs to be addressed? Why is this so important? How can you realistically address it in the time you have (and shape a plan to continue to speak to each other after you part ways)? Who is the audience that you need to reach?

Students spent the first day of the training exploring their own passions, values, and strengths as well as considering the passions, values, and strengths of the other students. By familiarizing themselves with each other’s leadership and followership styles, students were able to arrange themselves into teams.

The second day of training included several outside speakers, many of whom are activists themselves such as Lilly Ledbetter, the namesake of the Fair Pay Act, and Jessica Brookshire, former Auburn student and founder of the anti-bullying nonprofit Kids Against Ridicule Meanness and Aggression (KARMA). The newly formed teams were instructed to take note of what interested their team members most and to look for intersections of topics about which they as a group felt passionate. They were asked to create a list of very specific topics in which team members shared interest and to spend downtime discussing topics that group members were already involved with including clubs, associations, and projects. Together they needed to determine a few topics that the entire team could agree were important.

The teams spent a good portion of the third day in the computer lab exploring social media sites, looking specifically at Facebook, Twitter, StumbleUpon, Google, Pinterest, and Tumblr as examples of massive networks on which they could explore and enter the universal conversations regarding the issues that interested their team. Teams were asked to work together to begin moving forward into their topic by responding to a blog, joining a network, or liking a page. By discovering useful ways to enter the conversation regarding their topics, teams were able to narrow their topics and determine how these topics were already being publically addressed through social media venues. After a long period of social media self-discovery, teams were given downtime in a quiet and reflective space to absorb what they had experienced. Then they were sent back to the computer labs or out onto the campus with flip cameras to begin co-creating their actions.

By the afternoon of the fourth day, the NEW Leadership Residential Intensive Training teams were ready to present to each other what they had collaboratively created. The following are the directions for the final presentations of the team action projects:

- The presentation should cover the what, why, how, and who of your issue;
Tell us what your topic is;

State clearly and definitively what action your group has taken and intends to continue to take;

Let us know who specifically you are targeting;

Walk us through how your group exercised leadership and followership to determine your topic;

Illustrate what social media and internet sites you explored to determine what knowledge is readily accessible to all;

Show us the page, blog, video etc. that you have created and indicate how you will continue to move forward after you part ways;

The presentation should convey the passion that inspires it and encourage us to be involved, to act, and to LEAD.

The results of this assignment were impressive, especially given the very short amount of time that these women were given to co-create their team action projects. Just as the students in the Women and Leadership class had done the semester before, the six teams that the RIT students organized themselves into exceeded my expectations in terms of the potential reach of their productions and the blending of a variety of social media tools to accomplish their missions.

According to their mission statements, Team Activism co-created “Hands Across the South” to empower local youth to reach out to national nonprofit organizations and to become civically engaged; Team Education co-created “The Beautiful Women Campaign” to help women build confidence and accept themselves as they are; Team Military co-created “Straight Up Media” to pare down today’s media to the basic unbiased facts in the state of Alabama; Team Nonprofit co-created “Chick Chat” to make a positive difference in the lives of young women by encouraging them to achieve their fullest potential; Team Politics co-created “Why We Vote” to raise awareness about voting and why it is particularly important for women, and Team Technology co-created “Women Empowerment Building,” or WEB, to empower and inspire women to reach their full potential through the use of technology. All of these projects are accompanied by multiple social media presences including Facebook, blogs such as Tumblr and Wordpress, and websites. As of this writing, all of them can still be engaged within some realm in the blogosphere, and all present the potential for students to return to the work and their group at any time. All of the groups also incorporated the possibility to expand their teams infinitely if they choose to do so.

I will elaborate on one example, “Hands Across the South,” or HATS because its scope and premise is strikingly similar to Trend 31’s in its effort to create a network of networks that, if engaged, could have an infinite reach. Like Trend 31, HATS also aspires to create an exponentially massive network of existing community and civic engagement projects. Also like Trend 31, HATS began with a Facebook page that helped them create a conversation that would lead them to another level of social media engagement. From there, they expanded the Facebook page to a website using weebly.com, and the website remains active at http://HandsAcrossTheSouth.weebly.com/.
On the homepage of their website, HATS states their mission: “to empower our local youth to reach out to national non-profit organizations and to become civically engaged in their communities.” They reach out to their audience, whom they identify as local youth, by echoing Elizabeth Scharpf’s sentiment that we need not wait for the government to address our problems, saying,

Volunteering helps to get the community engaged in solving their own problems, rather than relying on federal aid. Through volunteerism, connections with other people are made which helps to make the community as a whole much stronger. These connections can lead to developing a sense of purpose, finding a true passion for a cause, and even opening up leadership and employment opportunities.

One of the most impressive facets of this mission statement is the way that it both incorporates and expands on the leadership tenets that had been reviewed in the days leading up to the action project. Participants in the residential training who engaged in the social media action project not only absorbed the concepts of traditional leadership training—such as strengths, values, passion, and engagement—that the Women’s Leadership Institute had been teaching; they acted on them by reaffirming the necessity for passion that proceeds engagement and by creating a template for engagement that their audience can use. They write, “We want our youth to be able to reach out to us so we can link them with organizations that encourage their own interests and allow them to get involved with causes that they can feel passionately about.”

Under a tab titled “Who We Are,” HATS goes on to express the urgency for young people to use their internet savvy to become involved early in life with the challenges that face their communities and that will ultimately affect them directly. They write that

Our organization seeks to connect local youth of Alabama, Georgia and Florida to national non-profit organizations in order to get involved in their local communities. Members that visit our website or Facebook can find organizations that interest them and find important information about the organization, as well as contact information, local events and how to get involved with the organization. These volunteer initiatives open up endless opportunities to the local youth, which could lead to developing important interests in the community, development of valuable skills and knowledge, and possible employment opportunities.

The purpose of their project is stated clearly, and backed up with a tab titled “Why We Chose This Mission” that spells out with statistics some of the civic challenges that young people in Georgia, Alabama, and Florida should consider, such as that 1.3 million students fail to graduate from high school, statistics on homicide rates among youth, nonfatal victimizations, drug abuse, and birth rates among women aged 15 to 19. The statistics suggest not only that action is needed, but that young people themselves need to get involved immediately to help alleviate the problems.
The call to action is followed with a tab titled “Where the Resources Are” that lists live links to 13 different community organizations including KARMA, the anti-bullying nonprofit developed by an Auburn student that has garnered national attention. The participants in the residential training had heard the founder of KARMA, Jessica Brookshire, speak during the training, and they had been given opportunities to work with Jessica throughout their stay with us on campus.

HATS concludes their website with a final tab that outlines the benefits of engaging in the community through the organizations that they list and with which they promise to assist in the creation of an ongoing network. Benefits include academic, employment, and personal benefits in addition to the benefit to the community.

HATS, like Trend 31, demonstrates cooperative community building and action that equitably co-creates and distributes power in an ongoing conversation. The conversation itself is the core of engagement that extends beyond itself to allow exponential engagement infinitely by others.

These projects proved to be quite instructive for those of us in the Women’s Leadership business. They illustrate that in the Social Era, leadership is already feminine in its collaborative, relational, and co-creative capacities. These projects also have the capacity to teach the instructor something about the value of knowledge as well. The technological fluidity of the Social Era is infinite. While we once believed that we could master certain fields or certainly the technology that we had at our disposal to learn them, today’s students must embrace the vast uncertainty of ever-changing technology. Embracing this uncertainty may lead to useful and productive engagement with communities and the development of communities beyond our wildest dreams.
In July 2011, I received an email from the dean of Auburn University’s College of Liberal Arts asking me if I would be interested in brainstorming with her about the formation of a theatre company dedicated to creating performances around themes of diversity. We met shortly thereafter to begin discussing the form such a troupe might take and what resources it would demand. We knew that we wanted to create a theatre company specifically dedicated to a wide range of issues. Perhaps because Auburn is located in the Deep South, diversity here is often thought of in very black and white terms, and we wanted to widen the discussion. The goal was to find new ways to encourage dialogue in accordance with Auburn University’s strategic plan to foster a total campus environment that respects differences and encourages inclusiveness. Specific elements of this plan included 1) increasing the recruitment, retention, and representation of people of color, ethnic minorities, women, people with disabilities, and other underrepresented students, faculty, administrators, and staff to a level that reflects the population; 2) developing and implementing a comprehensive system of education and training focused on effectively managing and leveraging diversity for students, faculty, and staff; and 3) building and strengthening partnerships with diverse communities, businesses, and civic community organizations to support diversity and multiculturalism in the university and in external communities. Through the Mosaic Theatre Company we can look at the value and challenges of using community-based theatre as part of structured university diversity programming. More broadly, we can also look at this theater initiative as a method of scholarship both “in” and “of” community, both within and outside the university proper.

Theatre provides an ideal forum for investigating diversity by engaging audiences and performers in imaginative exploration, empathy, and shared narrative. I was fortunate that I did not have to convince my administration of the
power of theatre and that I had their support from the beginning of the program. Not all administrators, however, recognize the efficacy of theatre and are more likely to turn instead to models that reflect common academic practices. Most traditional diversity training programs are either explicitly didactic in nature or rely on mediated performances, like film, to instigate discussion. Although these forms are useful, they carry limitations. The aesthetic distance that film provides between the depicted experience and the vicariously involved audience allows for greater emotional distancing by the audience, and therefore limited catharsis. Given the American desire to imagine itself a post-racial, post-feminist, equal-opportunity society, many audiences find lectures patronizing or redundant as they believe they are already knowledgeable about these issues. For example, a 2006 study of the efficacy of varied diversity strategies for the workplace found that “programs that target managerial stereotyping through education and feedback (diversity training and diversity evaluations) are not followed by increases in diversity,” whereas programs that established responsibility for implementing diversity or addressed social isolation led to increases in managerial diversity (Kalev, Dobbin, & Kelly 2006). Research on diversity initiatives at the college level show more positive results across the board but continue to suggest that success is greatest when training is sustained and varied (see Chang 2002).

Diversity training presented through theatre breaks down barriers through laughter and engagement, encouraging participants to enter empathetically into experiences beyond their own. Through the process of identification with embodied characters, audience members feel what it is like to walk in others’ shoes. A study on the effectiveness of the arts in stimulating racial understanding revealed that “the arts were able to be simultaneously about collectivity and individuality, visibility and anonymity, and in their own ways all of these were important to antiracism and cross-cultural learning” (Clover 2006). Likewise, an Australian study of the impact of attending theatrical performances for children revealed the potential for the arts “to foster positive dispositions for shared cultural diversity” (Schiller 2005, 550).

Given the increasing complexity of the composition of the United States, the need for students to learn about others’ experiences is increasingly urgent. In 2011, the population of the United States was 78.1 percent Caucasian, 13.1 percent African American, 5 percent Asian, and 16.7 percent Hispanic (United States Department of Commerce). The student bodies of universities often are not similarly diverse. For example, in 2011 Auburn University’s student body was more Caucasian (85.5 percent), but less representative than national norms (7.4 percent African American, 1.8 percent Asian, and 2.8 percent Hispanic) (Institute of Educational Sciences). Today’s college students are tomorrow’s leaders and they will be leading in an increasingly multicultural United States. Programming to introduce these students to diverse experiences and points of view is essential for the continued positive development of our nation.

Unfortunately, even though the United States continues to diversify, theatre continues to favor consideration of white, heterosexual, patriarchal, middle-to-upper class, able-bodied, and other commonly considered normative concerns performed by and for members of these groups. In 2011, the Asian American
Performers Action Committee took on the task of tallying the ethnic makeup of performers on Broadway and in New York City’s most prominent not-for-profit theatres (The Asian American Performers Action Coalition, 2006). Over the past five years, Caucasian actors filled 80 percent of all roles and were the only ethnicity to over-represent compared to respective population size in the area. African American actors experienced around 50 percent gains in their employment, but their percentage of all roles remained only around 14 percent; Latino actors also saw gains of 50 percent during this period, though they remain only 3 percent of the total number; Asian American actors, on the other hand, have seen a decrease in numbers by nearly 100 percent, leaving them with only 2 percent representation (2006).

The Mosaic Theatre Company (Mosaic) was born out of an attempt to embrace the efficacy of theatre, to diversify theatrical representations and constituencies, and to open dialogue within and without Auburn University. The name came out of the belief that to be a functioning society we must honor both distinct individuals and the communities in which they are brought together. Just as a mosaic is created by integrating the best elements of smaller pieces that do not lose their own form into an artistically designed whole, the goal of Mosaic is to generate works that are built on individual artists and their experiences as part of a complete artistic performance designed to stimulate conversation about issues of diversity.

After our initial brainstorming session, I had a follow-up meeting with the dean, the college’s diversity officer, and the chair of the Department of Theatre to talk in more detail about how to get the project off the ground. Two months later we all met with the financial administrators for the College for a final session in which the project was approved and a budget set, with plans to hold auditions for the inaugural company in Spring 2012. Before I could hold auditions, however, I needed to figure out the structure for the company’s creation and development. There were many challenges that included scheduling and workload. During the academic year, both the actors and I would be involved in rehearsals for departmental productions that rehearse for twenty-four hours each week, which essentially eliminated the option of Mosaic rehearsal time during the academic year. As a result, we decided to make the first summer session our primary rehearsal period. The daily nature of summer session courses also ensured that we would have the consistent time together necessary for the development of a functioning ensemble. Our plan was that students would be required to enroll in a production course for which they would attend daily three-hour rehearsals as well as do outside work and research, and I would get paid for being the faculty member for this course. We hoped that since students could earn credit for the course, and therefore their time in the company, they would be willing to stay on campus for half of their summers.

Unfortunately, this was not the case. For one thing, the aforementioned lack of diversity in the field tends to discourage minorities from joining theatre programs. For another, the intense rehearsal processes and time demands of theatre make it a difficult area of study for students who must work in addition to going to school. Many of our students go home over the summer in order to work full-time and save money for the following academic year. Asking students to
give up work opportunities in order to stay in Auburn and pay to take an elective
class turned out to be a burden that even the most eager students were unable to
take on. As a result, we were in danger of creating a theatre company about
diversity that was populated only by white performers. After losing over half of
the students who initially auditioned to summer employment, internships, or
travel abroad, we attempted to sweeten the pot and woo students with
scholarships that covered half of their tuition fees. Although a number of students
informed me that they wanted to get on board, nearly all of them backed out at
the last minute as financial realities hit home. After learning of the situation, the
dean committed scholarship money to cover full tuition for all students enrolled
in Mosaic. Students were still responsible for their own housing and other costs
related to living in Auburn for the summer, but the aid towards tuition enabled
them to join the company even when it continued to stress them financially. One
of the largest concerns I have for the long-term viability of this project is finding
greater financial support for students so that they can be paid for their labor in
Mosaic. Without this support, students will continue to be forced to place jobs
ahead of Mosaic, which has a profoundly negative impact on the success of our
ensemble-based work.

This ensemble-based work is one of the greatest strengths of Mosaic Theatre
Company. During our initial brainstorming, I mentioned to the dean that I was
interested in doing work that was created by the company itself and could,
therefore, specifically connect to the community for which it was performed. Like
many theatre practitioners and scholars, I am motivated by Augusto Boal’s work
to generate theatre that speaks directly to community issues, allowing performers
and audiences to come together to imagine alternative approaches to specific
events (see Boal 1995). I am also inspired by work I did with Joan Lipkin and her
DisAbility Project during its developmental phase in the mid-1990s. As Professor
Ann Fox said in an interview about Lipkin’s work, this style of performance
comes “out of the community for the community to answer questions it has about
itself” (qtd. in Levitt 2009, 2). My thought was that by using an ensemble of
actors drawn from the college community who would create work of vital
importance to themselves, we would best create work that spoke to the specific
needs and interests of college students, particularly those at Auburn University.

One of the greatest challenges for me in terms of developing this project was
finding potential audiences. My primary goal for the company has always been to
get involved with new student (and possibly faculty) orientation. This goal comes
out of hearing about the positive impact of Boal-inspired scenes of college life on
incoming freshmen at Indiana University as a part of mandatory orientation,
Lipkin’s positive experiences working at Yale University to devise work for
freshman orientation via the Kaleidoscope Project, and the aforementioned
research that suggests that theatre helps people develop empathy and
understanding.

I looked for current programs within the university that made connections
with new students. Auburn operates a successful summer orientation program
called Camp War Eagle (CWE) that is dedicated to helping incoming students
“adjust to the university” (Auburn University 2012), and I thought that they might
be interested in incorporating our work into one of their orientation activities.
After a fair amount of hounding, I sat down to meet with the year-round staff of CWE. This experience demonstrated how difficult it is to get people interested in theatrical programming before they can see it in action. My suggestion that Mosaic perform a short piece of theatre about life on campus as a means of prompting discussion about diversity that could be mediated by Camp War Eagle counselors was met with disinterest. This lack of interest was explained as stemming from the fact that CWE already performed skits about college life that were written and performed by the counseling staff; however, few to none of the staff had training in theatre. Instead, I was offered the opportunity to personally attend their public showing and give feedback in advance of the next summer session. Although I understood the disinclination to introduce untested performers and material to a successful orientation program, I was frustrated by the seeming assumption that anyone can successfully write and produce theatre. Realizing that we needed to have a product to show people before they would work with us to reach college audiences, I decided to focus my efforts on creating an end-of-summer performance to which we could invite potential future collaborators.

This led to my next big challenge—finding a way to use the summer session to both generate a complete production script that we could begin performing for wide audiences and teach our actors the skills necessary to continue to devise new work as our audiences grow and diversify. Although I have experience in improvisation and have been tangentially involved with devised work in the past, I do not consider myself an expert in this area. As a result, one of our largest budget items was to bring Joan Lipkin in as a guest artist for the last month of our summer rehearsal process.

This guest residency was essential for the success of the program for many reasons. Most obviously, Lipkin has a successful career as a playwright, producer, and deviser that spans many decades and many constituencies, and for which she has won many awards. Devised theatre is a specific form of theatre in which the script is produced by collaborative creation of the group, which includes performers and may also include others. We knew that bringing her in would ensure that we had the tools and training to create a theatrically compelling and ethically engaged piece of theatre. For a program just trying to establish itself, this knowledge was essential. Given the skepticism I already experienced from organizations like CWE, the ability to create engaging content that could be brought to prospective audiences was also essential. Lipkin’s inclusion in the early stages of the project also validated the work, both in terms of speaking to its importance and in terms of her reputation. Lipkin is a tremendous advocate for her work, and her ability to articulate the visionary aspect of establishing an ongoing theatre company dedicated to diversity expanded the impact of our work. She knows how few of these companies exist, and can attest to the very specific and powerful effect they have on audiences. Her skills as an advocate were equally important for the members of the company, since they often wondered what we were really doing. Though I had a clear sense of the project in my mind, it was difficult to communicate what the final product would look like until the pieces all came together. Lipkin was able to reassure the actors that I knew what I was doing and that we were creating something of value. Finally, her presence
gave me a vital collaborator and co-conspirator with whom I could develop plans, explore new ideas, and lean on when things were challenging.

Before Lipkin arrived on campus, however, I spent the first two and a half weeks working with the members of the company to lay groundwork for the devising process. We spent the majority of this time getting to know each other and developing trust both through discussion and improvisational exercises. Trust was essential to our success, given that Lipkin and I planned to generate all material from personal experiences and stories, that company members did not already have a long and productive history together, and that we all came from varied backgrounds. It is impossible to deal honestly with issues of diversity when people are concerned about betrayal or instigating antagonism. Universal sharing of personal stories on the same topics allowed us to see how our experiences diverged and paralleled, and along with the improvisation we engaged in, taught us that we could look foolish around each other without ill effect because we had each other’s backs. Because it was important to me that the space feel completely safe for all involved, I required my stage managers to participate in all activities for these first two weeks, even though this activity is not typical of stage managers and they were uncomfortable with acting. I also opened myself up to the group in ways that I do not traditionally share with students. I felt that it was important that they see me as a fellow collaborator and someone with my own human experiences, not as someone there to pass judgment on them. I believe that this full participation and engagement had profound effects on the health of our work together. As an added benefit, the improvisational work we did together provided us with foundational skills that we used in our daily work with Lipkin when we began to devise new work.

Before Lipkin and I stepped into the rehearsal space together, we had to decide what sort of model(s) we wanted to use. As I imagined this new company, I felt that its ideal form would be a group that auditioned for members once yearly, and then rehearsed and performed together year round. Given that the bulk of the members would be students, I realized that the material we created would need to be flexible enough that we could swap people in and out of roles and easily rework scripts in order to accommodate their challenging and often conflicting schedules. In fact, one of the most essential non-creative elements of this company had to be its flexibility in form, in content, and in participants. Models of repertory companies suggest that the viable structure is a company comprised of a core of actors who know all material well and can step in and out of many roles, actors who know each other so well and are so well-rehearsed that they can be thrust into new configurations of the scripts and adjust on the spot. This model is built around a core batch of material that is constantly expanded and developed, and able to be performed at any time, in any combination, and in any place. These demands influenced my planning sessions with Lipkin.

When we originally spoke, I suggested that we might want to model our work on Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed, given its adaptability to each individual time and space. As we sat down to talk about it, we both agreed that we were uncomfortable with the dichotomy of oppressor and victim that underlies much of this approach. We shared the viewpoint that such a clear-cut perspective does not always successfully reflect the structures of our society, or at least the ways in
which many Americans like to think about themselves. In the land of the
American Dream, theatre that encourages viewing others as the source of
oppression seems potentially problematic, although Boal’s empowerment of the
“spect-actor” to model change is beguiling and powerful (Boal 1985). This
performance model, however, requires an audience willing to become part of the
performance, to become voluntary actors responsible for transforming the action
on stage as a means of rehearsing alternative approaches to societal challenges.
Furthermore, I was particularly sensitive about using a structure that provides a
completely transparent challenge to power structures at a school in the Deep
South. Much has been made of the South’s congeniality and decorum, as well as
the ways in which southerners value good manners and outward friendliness.
Though I had no intention of sugarcoating subjects or stepping away from
controversy, I also had no intention of alienating my audience to the point that it
was unwilling to consider the truth of what we had to say.

Based on her years experimenting with the art form and training in a variety
of methods for devising work, Lipkin suggested using an adapted version of
Playback theatre instead. Not only does this form embrace humor and fantasy as a
means of building community between audience and actors, but it also provides a
framework by which we could develop the material for our core production script
while learning the skills we would need to generate theatre on the spot for new
audiences in the future. My hope for Mosaic was that we would be able to adapt
our work to the groups for whom we performed. This required the development
of a script comprised of individual pieces that could stand alone or in any
configuration, much like interlocking beads that can be reassembled from a
bracelet to a necklace and everything in between. Playback’s grounding in short,
unique stories was a perfect fit for this demand. A highly oversimplified
explanation of Playback theatre is that one person tells a story which is then
embodied with embellishments (like dream sequences) by the members of the
acting company. Typically, the storyteller is a member of the audience, but for the
sake of our work to develop a core script, both our storytellers and performers
were the members of Mosaic. We combined these elements of Playback theatre
with techniques to draw out compelling stories that Lipkin had developed over
the years.

In order to turn the improvisations into theatrically compelling performance
texts, we recorded them and had stage managers transcribe them for us. Once we
had rough texts in hand, Lipkin and I worked on revisions and shaping. Some
scripts stayed largely as they were originally played and others changed
substantially in order to make them more theatrical or to make sure that the key
arguments were clearly articulated and developed. When dealing with personal
stories, it can be easy for performers to get bogged down in the truth, sacrificing
images and scenes that would have more universal resonance to the altar of
faithfulness to the way events happened. This is particularly true for young
performers with limited experience in determining what makes theatre most
compelling. As a result, the editing work we did was essential from the
perspective of craftsmanship. It also helped that Lipkin and I have longer life
experience than most of the students and could bring that wider experience to
bear in selecting topics for their resonance or vitality for current events. Our age,
however, also got in the way at times, and it was important that we let the actors take a strong hand in the language and the content of the scripts. Although there are many universals to college life, like the stress of dating, the ways in which these events play out has changed drastically from our era of dorm hall phones and word processors. In order to speak to current college students, we must speak to and through their experiences.

As a result, most of our time was spent in improvisation and storytelling, where the actors were in control. Lipkin and I gave the students prompts like, “tell a story about a kiss you really wanted” or “tell a story about a time in which you witnessed an act of cruelty and wish you had spoken out about it” in order to focus our stories on particular topics. By having all members of the company tell stories around the same prompt, we ensured that no one felt singled out or had to worry about being alone. This technique also allowed us to control how deeply we waded into difficult territories, starting with shallower topics like dating and moving into issues like violence after we had found that we could safely be vulnerable in front of each other without ill effect.

Our comfort with each other was enhanced by the rather goofy improvisational work I did with the company at the beginning of the rehearsal process. We practiced a lot of supportive verbal strategies such as “Yes and,” but we also worked on using ourselves to create human props and furniture. This work opened up the creative floodgates, removing internal censorship and encouraging creative and fanciful collaboration. When Lipkin and I began working with the actors on Playback storytelling, we held off on incorporating the box of minor props and costume elements that is traditional for the form. The actors were initially hesitant to throw themselves into scenes, and we felt that forcing them to continue to create the sound and shape of cars or clocks or other items would aid in teaching them to think beyond their personal limitations and comfort zones. Initially, our plan was to incorporate props and costume pieces once the actors became braver. We found, however, that we were drawn into these scenes more strongly by leaving all elements to the creative capabilities of the human actors. Demonstrations of actor virtuosity and skill have long been a central draw for audiences, and human props gave our actors ample opportunity to appeal to audiences on this basis. The imaginative process of reading a human body and determining what it represents further engages the audience actively in the performance. They cannot simply sit back and watch an easily identified scene; they must join into the scene to fill in the blanks.

Perhaps the most surprising elements of this work, however, were the ways in which sticking to our reliance on nothing more than human talent reinforced the central concepts of the company: diversity, individuality, collaboration, and community. When six actors come together to build a car by creating wheels, fenders, and even a radio, they model the kind of world that Mosaic wants to see. This world is comprised of individual people with very different backgrounds who unselfishly work together to create a vibrant new environment in which all of them are equally supported. The power structures of our scenes shift constantly; an actor who has a featured role in one part of a story may squat on the ground to play a classroom desk in the next. The structure of the full production is unified and inclusive, yet this production is compiled out of
individual pieces that celebrate specific stories without seeking to unify them into one neat narrative. Furthermore, the lack of inanimate objects maintains audience attention upon human behavior. Our theatrical world is created by humans, just as our real world is structured by them.

The use of actors playing inanimate objects aided audience reception to the actors’ cross-gendered, cross-racial, and otherwise Othered performances. Mosaic Theatre Company relies on actors taking on other peoples’ stories, and performing roles well outside of their own identities. Because Americans typically define things clearly in terms of binaries (black/white, male/female, straight/gay, etc.), I was concerned that audiences would either read race into stories in which it was not an issue, or that they would be unable to seriously consider material and issues when they were performed by those who did not fit the roles. Based on feedback during audience talkbacks, it appears that that is what originally happened. The first scene we performed was about dating in college, and it featured one black and one white actor. Although race had nothing to do with these particular dating issues, at least one audience member predicted that would be the gist of the piece because of the racial composition of the cast. This type of misreading, however, quickly ended, as audiences became accustomed to seeing actors as fluid shapeshifters, capable of taking on whatever qualities were called for at any given moment—be they racial, gender, or inanimate.

Although our stark production values were a perfect fit for our mission and goals, I became nervous as we approached our first public performance. I was unsure if our audiences, accustomed to contemporary theatre that relies heavily on spectacle, would appreciate the rawness of this work. The dean never tried to exert influence on the nature of our work, letting us take her concept and run with it as we pleased. As the date neared when she would finally have the opportunity to see her concept as we had interpreted it, I feared that it would fall short of expectations or that it would be too honest in its critique of our culture. Work of this nature always walks a fine line between pointing out flawed or harmful structures and alienating or angering the people who benefit from them, in both money and power. I saw the profound impact the process made on those of us who make up Mosaic and hoped that it would carry over to our audiences. Each day we worked together we found more of our commonalities and our differences, each day we made a stronger community that developed bonds and skillsets, and each day we uncovered the powerful link between being heard onstage and finding a voice offstage. All of our members became powerful advocates for equality, diversity, and compassion through this work and we could not wait to see how audiences might join the conversation. Yet we were nervous that audiences would be resistant to join in, particularly here in the South. This region is known for its politeness and guarded approaches to conflict—for example, see the quintessential southern phrase, “Bless her heart,” usually stated before or after expressing disdain. We were unsure how audiences would take to straightforward challenges to the dominant majority. As it turns out, they are as anxious to have real discussion about the issues that shape their daily lives as we are.
Response to the project in its first year has been phenomenal. I expected audiences at our first two performances to be supportive, given that they all came of their own volition. They were indeed. One audience member brought her teenaged daughter and wrote in a personal email that “the talent displayed and the issues covered . . . just really got me thinking . . . who would think that a night of theatre could do so much that hours of family therapy has never been able to reach.” Performances as part of mandatory residential hall staff training were equally productive. Surveys completed after this performance revealed that 77 percent of respondents would talk to their peers about issues raised in performance and 61 percent agreed that it changed the way they thought about diversity. These numbers are particularly notable given that residence hall staff are already more aware about diversity than the average student body.

Interest in the company has grown campus-wide after the success of these early performances. I am happy to report that the dean liked what she saw, and that her support of the program has only grown after this experience. We are now working together to explore the possibility of touring the company to other college campuses. Given the dearth of programs like this in the region, we believe that we can use Mosaic to expand dialogue and awareness about diversity well beyond Auburn’s border. During the first month of the academic year, we fielded numerous requests to perform across Auburn’s campus: as part of an event celebrating the work of Maya Angelou, for a graduate class on diversity, for an honors fraternity, for a freshman leadership program, for the Dean’s Advisory Council, for the Alabama Higher Education Diversity Officer’s conference, for the College’s student diversity research event, and as a kick-off event for a new campus organization dedicated to increasing diversity awareness.

Positive response to Mosaic is actually the greatest challenge for us moving forwards. For one thing, all of the members in the company are students, most of whom work 10-30 hours a week in addition to taking a full course load. None of us share similar schedules, so it was challenging enough to find one time to rehearse three hours weekly, never mind for all of us to make it to randomly scheduled performances. Even when members of the company can make it, performing takes a minimum of a three-hour commitment, which eats into the time they need to do what they came to college to do—be students. Until and unless we are able to pay students for the work they do for Mosaic, our work by necessity has to be a lower priority than their paying jobs and their scholarship. Although we developed the work such that we can plug people in and out of roles when we have to work around students who cannot make performances, this work requires additional rehearsal time while actors learn new roles and we rewrite segments for smaller casts. We also continue to need time to create new material and revise what we have as we get useful feedback from audience talkbacks and surveys.

In addition to all of the time stresses my company members face, I am responsible for writing new scripts and script revisions, fielding performance requests and determining whether we have enough actors available to perform to make it a possibility, responding to e-mail inquiries, giving media interviews, working with marketing and publicity, writing grants, and attending various classes and groups to discuss our work. This is all on top of my normal
departmental workload, where like all of my colleagues I teach a 3–2 course load, direct one full mainstage production, and serve on committees. I also head two degree tracks, with all of the assessment and other responsibilities that entails. Although I receive compensation for my work during the summer session’s rehearsal and creation period, it in no way covers the additional time I spend on the project during the academic year. I know that the administration would like to be able to fully compensate me for my work, but it falls outside of traditional responsibilities and methods of payment, and in times of fiscal restraint, there is neither funding to buy course releases nor additional salary. At present, the work brings its own reward and I am willing to devote myself to it, but this level of commitment will be difficult to sustain in the long run. Not only is it exhausting, but it also takes a toll on my own scholarship. Whereas I once used summers, weekends, and holidays to research and write, I now spend them working on Mosaic. This lack of time to devote to my scholarship becomes a second financial setback as I lose the ability to do the traditional work rewarded by university tenure and promotion committees. I say all this to show that one of the greatest challenges of this type of work is accurately assessing the various resources (time, money, personnel, etc.) needed in advance of knowing what the work will actually be.

In fact, the very fluid nature of live performance is both the strength and the difficulty of using theatre to engage issues of diversity. The ability of live actors to respond in the moment to precise problems (of both the time and the community) ensures that theatre provides a direct link between people and the culture in which they live. This ability to remain always current provides the power of the form. It is also the greatest challenge for articulating success and needs in ways that fit frequently arcane academic structures. Artists must be able to respond to needs in the moment they arise, yet they are often funded and supported based upon the needs of the past. Finding administrators with the ability and willingness to change the nature of their support as quickly as performers change the nature of their work is the key to the long-term viability of projects like the Mosaic Theatre Company.
Chapter 4: Volunteering in the Arts: Community Engagement While Developing Initiative and Gaining Valuable Skills

Barbara Bondy

A May 3, 2012 report by the Economic Policy Institute entitled, “The Class of 2012: Labor Market for Young Graduates Remains Grim,” states that “In economic recessions as well as expansions, the unemployment rate for young workers (those under age 25 years) is typically around twice as high as the overall unemployment rate” (Schierholz et. al, 2012). The report continues, “Given that the unemployment picture for young college graduates has yet to show substantial improvement, the Class of 2012 will be joining a significant backlog of unemployed college graduates from the Classes of 2009, 2010, and 2011 in an extremely difficult job market” (2012). Further, “This trend persists over time because young workers are relatively new to the labor market—often looking for their first or second job—and they may be passed over in hiring decisions due to lack of experience” (2012).

In an unrelated report, a US Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics survey entitled “Volunteering in the United States Sept. 2010–Sept. 2011” found that 64.3 million people volunteered through or for an organization at least once between September 2010 and September 2011. The collected data included the fact that: “Persons in their early twenties (20-24 years) were the least likely to volunteer (19.4 percent)” (2011). Among volunteers, 41.9 percent became involved with their main organization after being asked to volunteer by someone associated with the organization. About the same proportion (41.6 percent) became involved through their own initiative.

In both reports, the group of 20–24-year-olds stands out because, while they rank as twice the national average in unemployment in the US, they are also the age group that is least likely to volunteer. Volunteer efforts can offer skills and experience that are transferrable to employment; therefore, volunteer activities can be useful to college students during their undergraduate years as a career-focused strategy that also forms a basis for community and civic engagement.
College graduates are aware of the catch-22: You cannot become employed without experience, and you cannot gain experience without employment. Job-seeking college students have always faced this dilemma as they acquire higher education to situate themselves in a productive, rewarding, and financially independent future. Today, they emerge as graduates who face a difficult economy with an outlook for job prospects that is bleak and highly competitive.

Throughout the decade of the 1990s, I gained fruitful experience through sustained efforts as a long-time volunteer working for non-profit arts organizations while I worked a full-time job. More recently, while teaching a professional practices class in the Department of Art at Auburn University, I reflected on the many skills I had gained from my volunteer efforts and incorporated the experience into my teaching practice.

I have responded to the ‘no experience, no job dilemma’ by developing pedagogical strategies in community and civic engagement that offer a solution to the lack of work experience of job-seeking college students and respond to the reported shortage of volunteer efforts in the aforementioned age group. These teaching strategies capitalize on a reported finding that individuals are more inclined to volunteer after being asked to do so, and require students to volunteer for course credit with the hope that they will recognize the value and be motivated to take the initiative to volunteer again.

Making Connections: The Eureka Event

In 2008, I had an insight while I was teaching my professional practices class. The class is taught on a rotation basis by studio art faculty to senior-level undergraduate students who are pursuing a BA in Art or BFA in Fine Art. The course is designed to introduce students to careers in the arts and help prepare them for graduate school applications, artist residencies, internships, and the workplace. They develop a portfolio of career-focused documents such as a résumé, artist statement, and cover letter.

Other assignments in this two-credit hour class include researching non-profit art organizations to find their missions, structures, and budgets; writing an arts event news release; developing a visiting artist’s itinerary; writing an artist’s biography; and introducing a guest speaker. These assignments reflect applicable skills if one were to work for an arts organization.

Writing a résumé is the first assignment in the professional practices class. It serves as a springboard for discussion about career goals and how students can achieve them. Students are provided with a model résumé as they prepare a first draft, which I copy and distribute to the entire class. Students are then expected to review and comment on their peers’ résumés. The objective is for students to learn from each other, gaining ideas for their own résumés.

The insight occurred to me on the day of peer review. The classroom was quiet for a short time while students read the résumés. As they began to realize the weaknesses in their own résumés by comparison, they became anxious, particularly those planning to graduate that semester. Some students noticed that there was far more white space than accomplishments on the résumé and realized that they did not have a record of achievement to report. Some résumés were
starkly minimal, with little work experience and no community or civic engagement or leadership activities. However, students who had been engaged in this way throughout high school had impressive résumés. This difference became the impetus for discussing the value of community and civic engagement and the many benefits of taking the initiative to volunteer.

I have often reflected on that class as motivation to help students prepare for the workplace. I advocate for a subtle shift in students’ mindset about volunteer work—while the civic contribution is paramount and rewarding, volunteering for a non-profit organization (NPO), in this case related to the arts, will uncover latent abilities and push the threshold of potential for a future professional. In class, I shared my sustained volunteer experience and how through reflection, I recognized the unexpected benefits of my efforts. While I was motivated by the importance of volunteering as good citizenship and arts activism, it became a means to gain significant skills for professional development. For example, the skills I gained volunteering aided my acceptance into graduate school, and administrative tasks I had practiced as a volunteer helped me earn assistantships while studying.

I subsequently modeled this reflection into community and civic engagement teaching strategies designed to help students build their résumés and gain a competitive edge in the workplace. I developed an experience-based pedagogical approach that would encourage students to engage in volunteer work to gain work skills transferrable to paid employment, as was my experience. At the same time, my goal was to spark an interest in lifelong citizenship and volunteerism.

My Experience as a Sustained Volunteer

“If we want students to participate in community and civic engagement, we have to serve as role models” (Dr. C. Slaton, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, New Mexico State University). I served as a volunteer for non-profit arts organizations for over a decade in the 1990s in a city with 200,000 residents. I began volunteering at the ground level, helping to build walls in a gallery, posting flyers for events, and designing newsletters. After a few years as an active volunteer, I was elected by members of the organization to serve as chairperson and president of two arts organizations (Lori). The terms for these executive officer positions lasted 2–3 years and led to more responsibilities and a deeper understanding of how the organization works within the greater community.

My leadership roles involved advocating for non-profit arts organizations and the field in general at a time when education cutbacks were imminent. I chaired meetings for which organizational bylaws stipulated the use of Robert’s Rules of Order. I organized fundraisers, prepared news releases, and worked collaboratively on a community-wide event with a group of NPOs from the social service sector and visual and performing arts (Arteite, Inc.). The event promoted discussion surrounding issues of domestic violence and the role of the arts in expanding this dialogue.

Within a few years, I was invited to serve as a representative of the local arts community and join municipal committees that involved public art (City Centre Public Art Resource Team, 1996–98) and urban development and downtown
revitalization (Urban Design Task Force, 1997–98). These committees had a broad impact on the community through policy development and strategic planning.

Beginning in 1994 and spanning four years, with two artists and a lawyer, we co-founded an endowment for the arts with the goal of providing annual community grants in the arts through a foundation in hopes of establishing a legacy of support (Rourke, 2012). The endowment was incorporated in 1998, a strategic plan was developed, and the NPO is in operation today.

I learned the roles that municipal and higher governments have in providing a stimulating environment for the arts and how to access these entities for funding of the arts. This knowledge inspired me to develop, sponsor, and present an “All Candidates Meeting” based solely on the arts for municipal candidates during an election year (1994) in the community. While working with many talented individuals and skilled professionals, I learned how to identify and work with key stakeholders; conduct community forums; write articles of incorporation and by-laws; and establish a board of directors. In 1998, I was hired as coordinator of a provincial conference, which had the objective of encouraging other organizations to initiate an endowment to contribute to the sustainability of all arts in a community.

From driving in nails to working with government officials, I learned that positive, unexpected outcomes and reciprocal values emerge from sustained volunteer work for both the individual and the community. As one works within an organization, deeper connections to the needs of its members; its role in the community; and its relationships with other community sectors become more evident.

Understanding advocacy begins with innocuous activities and a minimal amount of accountability, such as posting flyers and casually talking with the public. Greater responsibilities provide insight regarding NPO needs and funding approaches, such as where funds can originate, and how various sources of funding can be used.

**Sustained Volunteer Experience is Transferrable to Paid Employment**

I convey to students that long-term volunteering provides insight into one’s abilities through work experience that is as valid as paid work. Volunteering develops career-focused skills that prepare an individual for the competitive workforce while helping an organization pursue its mission. Additionally, such sustained efforts fortify an individual’s confidence as a leader and foster appreciation for active participation in civic roles.

**What is A Volunteer?**

As a group activity, students in my classes are asked to answer the question, “What is a volunteer?” The student-compiled list is often geared toward altruism, and this activity is followed with discussion and reflection on applied definitions of volunteers:
1. Individuals who complete unpaid work (except for expenses) through or for an organization (US Department of Labor)

2. One who voluntarily offers his services in any capacity; one who of his own free will takes part in any enterprise (Oxford English Dictionary).

In a subsequent classroom exercise, students work in groups to compile lists of ideal employee and volunteer characteristics. They contrast and compare the lists and discover that they are identical. Their descriptors include: dedicated, creative, leader, mature, good work ethic, and works well with others. Together, we build an understanding and confidence so that an employer could see volunteer work as useful experience when interviewing and hiring.

I encourage students to list their volunteer work on their résumés under the category heading of either Community Engagement or Leadership, depending on their level of involvement. Rather than passively listing responsibilities under these headings, students are encouraged to briefly describe aspects of their volunteer involvement that would apply under the subheading Skills Gained. The expectation is that during interviews, students will have the opportunity to elaborate on their gained skills, resulting in a more compelling dialogue.

According to a survey conducted by Community Service Volunteers (CSV), a UK volunteering and training charity, nine out of ten people say, “volunteering increases job prospects” (NEWS, 2009). The survey, which polled former volunteers, revealed that giving up 4-12 months “for the good of your community” improves employability and much needed skills, and that “91% of respondents reported that the experience boosted their job prospects, while 84% said it improved their employability, with 96% saying it developed their skills” (2009).

What Employers Want

A 2012 survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers lists the following skills as the “soft skills” employers are looking for on résumés:

1. Ability to work in a team.
2. Leadership skills.
3. Written communication skills.
4. Problem-solving skills.

The skills I gained as a volunteer are reflected in this list and illustrate why I advocate teaching volunteerism as a strategy for students to appreciate the value of community engagement while gaining desired skills.

Teaching Objectives

The guiding principles I have established for incorporating volunteerism into the undergraduate curriculum include:
1. Incorporating and legitimizing volunteerism in the arts classroom.
2. Developing and supporting a community of college students who volunteer.
3. Developing awareness, positive attitudes, and lifelong commitment toward community engagement.
4. Promoting volunteering as a strategy to advocate for the arts and gain skills through volunteer work that are competitive and transferrable to paid employment.

Nine Unexpected Outcomes of Volunteering

I discuss with students nine unexpected outcomes gained through volunteering. These include:

1. Pursuing one’s potential and building confidence by doing so.
2. Developing initiative and leadership abilities.
3. Learning professional skills such as time management, responsibility, accountability, and teamwork.
4. Documenting community engagement and leadership skills on résumés.
5. Networking, which often leads to work opportunities.
6. Obtaining recommendation letters and references.
7. Gaining discussion content for interviews.
8. Broadening perspectives and an understanding of others by working with diverse groups of people, thus developing empathy and good listening skills.
9. Earning appreciation from others involved with the NPO.

Final Thoughts

Volunteering provides students with an opportunity to develop time-management skills as they learn to prioritize their life/work balance early in their careers. By requiring students to gain real world experience through volunteerism, community and civic engagement initiatives at an institution of higher education can intercept the paradoxical “no job, no experience” conundrum.

While the targeted student demographic discussed in this chapter enters postsecondary education straight out of high school, this approach to volunteering for experience applies to non-traditional students as much as traditional students. Regardless of age, experience gained through volunteer work will offer students a competitive edge in the job market while fostering civic participation and a deeper understanding of community. This experience will be valuable to NPOs as well. The essential nature of volunteers in many NPOs suggests that these organizations reach out to young volunteers; the professional practices course also helps students align their experience more closely with those needs.
Chapter 5: A Role for the University in Building Fundraising Capacity in Nonprofit Organizations: A Case Study

Cathleen O. Erwin

This essay discusses the design and delivery of a fundraising course that utilized a semester-long service learning component and entailed the use of academic expertise to directly benefit an external audience while supporting the overall mission of the university. The course is an illustration of university-community outreach, which has been defined as an integral part of the academic core that cuts across teaching, research, and service (Fear and Sandmann 1995). In the course, students were paired with local nonprofit organizations (NPOs), primarily human service organizations, to engage in experiential learning that enhanced the student learning experience and provided comprehensive fundraising analysis and recommendations for the community organizations.

Information about the content and structure of the course is provided along with the steps taken to identify and recruit the participating nonprofit organizations. The essay also discusses the experiences of the students in their interactions with nonprofit staff members and their development of skills, abilities and knowledge in fundraising, as well as some of the challenges and opportunities for future courses and outreach to community organizations.

Community Interest in Fundraising

Communities have strong interest in learning about fundraising as a method of support for nonprofit groups that rely heavily on public donations for support (commonly known also as public charities). Competition among charities for donated dollars remains fierce as the growth in the number of charitable groups has risen more dramatically than charitable giving. Charities increased in number by 60.5% during the ten-year period of 1998-2008, while charitable giving grew by only 32% in the same period (Wing, Roeger, and Pollack 2010). This
mismatch in the growth of charitable giving suggests that nonprofit public charities will look for ways to raise new revenue or in-kind donations. Charitable contributions of time, money, and materials are the defining source of revenue for public charities, although contributions may not be the sole or largest source of revenue (Moore 2000). For some organizations, charitable contributions are the lifeblood of the organization without which the organization would cease to exist, while for others contributions are a means of enhancing program offerings, providing capital funding, or building endowments for perpetual support.

Fund development, or fundraising, is a management function that is unique to the nonprofit organization (Burlingame 1997), and is considered by NPO chief executives to be one of the two crucial elements of nonprofit management, along with board relations (Herman and Heimovics 1989). However, fundraising can be one of the most troublesome aspects of NPO management; this is attributable in part to the increasing competition among NPOs, a lack of enthusiasm for fundraising among executive directors and board members, and the struggle over the mission and future direction that sometimes occurs because of the influence and interests of various stakeholder groups that are brought to light through fundraising efforts. In a recent survey of nonprofit professionals, fundraising was identified as the biggest challenge facing nonprofits, followed by communication and engagement (Business Wire 2012).

Historically, fundraising practitioners have typically entered, and continue to enter, the field with a variety of educational and professional backgrounds, and usually have little to no formal training in the discipline before their first fundraising job. The use of professional fundraising staff is common particularly in larger organizations; however, much fundraising is still conducted by executive directors, volunteers, and board members, as well as by external entities (e.g., United Way) and consulting firms (Hager, Rooney and Pollak 2002; Wagner 2003). It was not until the late 1980s that the first academic programs in fundraising began to emerge as a part of university education (Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University 2012). Since that time and with the dramatic growth of the nonprofit sector and the maturing of the fundraising profession, academic courses and degree programs have increased in number across the United States. The proliferation of academic programs increases the opportunities for individuals who are interested in careers in the nonprofit sector or who will serve as volunteers to enter the sector better prepared to function in this critical management role for a nonprofit organization. It also provides an opportunity for universities to incorporate service learning as a means for enhancing the learning experience for the student. This activity can also serve as an outreach activity through which the university partners with local nonprofit organizations to help build fundraising capacity, particularly for smaller organizations.

More broadly, fundraising skill is also an aspect of organizational capacity that is essential for sustainable initiatives and organizations (Kinsey and Raker 2003; Kinsey, Raker and Wagner 2003). Capacity building is often neglected in NPOs; as a whole the nonprofit sector tends to focus heavily on developing and delivering programs with little or no focus on developing the capacity that will strengthen organizations generally (Wagner 2003). Fundraising capacity is primarily accomplished by developing relationships with donor constituencies
that result in ongoing support. It is about matching the interests of the donors with the mission and needs of the organization. The primary donor constituencies for nonprofit organizations are individuals, corporations/businesses, and foundations, from which money is raised through a wide variety of approaches including personal solicitation, direct mail, grant proposals, and special events.

Building fundraising capacity in nonprofit organizations is not a new concept. This area of concern has prompted numerous grant makers to assist NPOs in their efforts to increase their fundraising capacity and improve results of their fundraising efforts overall. Many times, however, building fundraising capacity is viewed as a luxury that cannot be afforded by smaller or younger organizations (Campbell 2001). This gap provides an opportunity for university partnerships through outreach. Moreover, because fundraising capacity is an integral part of overall capacity building, building skills in this area may allow a resourceful board and executive director to implement an effective fundraising plan without special help (Lane and Levis 1989).

**Content and Structure of the Course**

Designing a course in fundraising provided me a unique opportunity to pair my professional work experience in development with my teaching responsibilities as an assistant professor. The course I designed was initially offered in spring semester 2013 as Special Topics in Public Administration: Fundraising for Nonprofit Organizations and had an enrollment of 17 students. The course was primarily intended for upper-division undergraduate students majoring in public administration and graduate students seeking an MPA, but was also marketed to students throughout the College of Liberal Arts who might have an interest in nonprofit administration and fundraising. The course expanded offerings in an existing graduate certificate in Nonprofit Management and Community Governance in the MPA program alongside existing courses in Nonprofit Management and Nonprofit Law and Governance.

I designed the course around several components including a competency-based approach, an experiential service-learning component, and an intensive writing experience. Service learning has been found to be effective in developing professional competencies among students (Rama 2003). About 45% of the competency-based courses use some type of service learning activity that typically involves partnerships between individuals or groups of students and local nonprofit organizations. Some of the courses required fundraising analysis of the nonprofit organizations’ current operations, while others required students to volunteer for or attend a fundraising event. In many instances, students were asked to identify and secure the cooperation of a nonprofit organization that they could work with during the course, which may have been attributable to the vast majority of the courses being offered at the graduate level.

Competency-based education focuses on what students need to know and to be able to do in the workplace rather than the more traditional approach that focuses on what the professor believes the student needs to know (Council on Education for Public Health 2006). It focuses on the outcomes, or competencies, that have been defined by employers and practicing professionals. The field of
fundraising has clearly defined competencies that are widely accepted and promoted through leading professional associations like the Association of Fundraising Professionals, Council on the Advancement and Support of Education, and the Association of Healthcare Philanthropy, among others. These organizations offer a common professional certification, the CFRE or Certified Fund Raising Executive. The competency domains associated with this certification include current and prospective donor research, securing the gift, relationship building, volunteer involvement, management, and accountability (CFRE International 2012). Specific skills, abilities, and knowledge areas are identified for each competency domain.

The textbook I chose for the course was *Achieving Excellence in Fundraising* (Tempel, Seiler, and Aldrich 2011). The accompanying instructor’s manual provided extensive suggestions for graduate and undergraduate assignments that could be utilized as service learning projects. I chose this textbook for the comprehensive competency-based approach it provided through its accompanying materials.

The course was scheduled as a three-credit hour course and met one day a week during a fifteen-week semester. Students were asked to read assigned chapters from the textbook in addition to selected readings prior to class, and were expected to be prepared to discuss current events and issues related to each week’s major topic. Two outside speakers were scheduled to discuss the United Way and planned giving. The primary form of assessment for the course was a series of written assignments focused on a variety of organizational and fundraising aspects of an existing nonprofit organization. The written assignments were portfolio pieces that ultimately were synthesized into a final paper and presented to the partner organizations in the form of a consultant’s report.

**Service Learning Component**

In designing the service learning component, I wanted my students to have multiple opportunities to interact with a nonprofit organization over the course of the semester. Next, I wanted them to complete a series of assignments based on information gathered from the NPOs that could be revised, if necessary, and compiled to create a final paper that would essentially be a consultant’s report, providing a comprehensive analysis of their NPO’s fundraising operations and developing some recommendations and resources that could serve as source material for strategic fundraising planning.

Because of the cross-listing of the course as both a graduate and undergraduate course, I suspected that most undergraduate students would not have an established relationship with a local nonprofit organization. I determined that I would need to identify and secure the cooperation of several local NPOs and then assign a student or students to each of these organizations. I also decided I would allow the graduate students to identify a NPO of their choosing in case they had an existing relationship with an organization. I later found that while graduate students were more likely than undergraduates to have an established relationship with a local NPO, many of the graduate students also needed assistance in finding an organization partner for the course.
During my initial planning for the course, I met with the director of the local United Way to discuss my plans and to determine whether she thought this would be beneficial for local NPOs and whether she would be willing to assist me with contacting the interested organizations. She was very receptive to the idea, and expressed her concern that many of the smaller United Way-funded organizations did little or no fundraising outside of their grant application to United Way each year. Organizations that did fundraise typically relied heavily on special events. We also discussed some of the challenges faced by these organizations in terms of identifying, orienting, and motivating board members to actively engage in fundraising activities. It was during this conversation that I began to see the potential for a long-term relationship between me as a representative of the university, and the local NPOs through which the university might be able to help organizations develop fundraising capacity.

We also discussed the need to make sure that our students were sensitive to the challenges faced by small organizations that are usually short-staffed, including some that may be operating with only a part-time staff member and heavily reliant on volunteers. In order to address this issue, I asked that she be a guest speaker during the second week of classes and I also reminded students to be cognizant of this issue throughout the semester emphasizing that fundraising is only one of the many responsibilities of an executive director of a small organization. It was important for the students to approach their partner organizations with the attitude of a student with no prior fundraising experience who is learning about fundraising, and as a person interested in learning about the organization and perhaps being able to provide some information that could be of use to the executive director in the future.

The United Way director contacted all of the United Way-funded organizations by email with information about the course and the opportunity to partner with a student. She received a positive response from the majority of organizations contacted, and from that group we identified eight potential partner organizations. I followed up by contacting each organization and in that contact provided additional information about the course and my professional credentials. I explained the process of assigning a student or students to their organizations, my communication with the organizations, and the nature of the information that the students would need to gather in order to complete their assignments. I asked that they contact me at any time with feedback or concerns, and communicated that I wanted the experience to be both enjoyable and valuable to their organization. I assured them that I would work with the students to make sure they did not overwhelm the organizations with their requests for information. After I determined the student-organization pairings, I contacted each organization with the name(s) of their student(s), their contact information, and the dates on which the student assignments were due so that organizations could anticipate how often they would be contacted during the semester. After that I had very little contact with the NPOs during the course of the semester, and did not receive any emails or calls regarding concerns or issues with the students.
Assignments and Grading

The assignments used in the course were taken directly from the instructor’s materials that accompanied the textbooks. The quality of these materials was one of the primary reasons for selecting the textbook, which I thought would be valuable in developing fundraising competencies based on my professional experience in fundraising and my familiarity with and confidence in the knowledge and reputation of the authors. Thirteen assignments were available in the textbook, and eight were identified as being most appropriate for students at the undergraduate level.

The undergraduate students were required to complete five assignments out of the eight undergraduate options; two of the assignments were mandatory and three were left to student choice. They were required to complete a gift profile and a direct mail letter, as well as three additional assignments out of six possible items, including a mission statement, a case statement and gift range for an annual fund, a foundation letter of inquiry, strategies for expanding the donor base, assessment of the total development program, and trustee roles in fundraising. Graduate students were required to complete a total of ten assignments out of thirteen, which included a mix of basic and advanced topics. Six assignments were required, including the gift profile; other required assignments for these students included a mission statement, a case statement and gift range for an annual fund, a foundation letter of inquiry, strategies for expanding the donor base, and trustee roles in fundraising. In addition, graduate students selected four assignments from among a list that included undergraduate topics as well as more advanced topics such as capital campaign readiness, planned giving, solicitation plans, management responsibilities, and fundraising cost analysis.

A final paper in the form of a consultant’s report was required for the course. The report compiled previously submitted assignments that had been revised based on my comments and any additional information or knowledge the students acquired after the initial submission. Students were required to write an introduction that would discuss the purpose of the report and briefly synthesize the contents, and to prepare the report in a booklet form with a table of contents, preface, acknowledgement page, appendices and references. I provided the students with a format template in order to ensure that the organization reports would have a constant and professional appearance. The organizations were provided with a hard copy as well as an electronic copy of the report after I had reviewed each and approved it for distribution.

The assignments accounted for fifty percent of the course grade, the final paper accounted for twenty percent, and participation accounted for thirty percent. Participation was a combination of attendance and the students’ preparation and participation in discussion of current topics each week. For each week, students were assigned to bring a current trade or news article to class that was relevant to the week’s topic, and to be prepared to share the article with the class and lead discussion about the article. At the end of the semester, each student also gave an informal presentation about their NPO including observations of the current development program and recommendations they were making to the organization in their report.
Discussion

Overall, I thought the first offering of the course was a success based on the feedback I received from the students and the quality of the work they produced. A majority of the students indicated that they had not previously participated in any type of semester-long service learning project prior to this class, and felt that it greatly enhanced their understanding of the subject. The quality of the student submissions improved throughout the semester after they had a chance to receive feedback and to take advantage of the opportunity to revise their work for the final paper. It was also valuable to have a few more mature and experienced graduate students in the course who were willing to have their work shared with the class, which helped to demonstrate the level of professionalism expected. I also found that the quality of many of the undergraduates’ work was outstanding and often exceeded my expectations.

Several students indicated at the end of the semester that prior to taking the course they did not have an appreciation for the complex issues associated with managing a nonprofit organization, the amount of money generated by nonprofit organizations, or the broad scope of fundraising as a profession. They also seemed to be surprised by some of the issues they found within the organizations, including board members who didn’t attend or support their organizations’ fundraising events, lack of staff, little to no evidence of strategic planning, difficulty in locating basic financial information by the organization itself, and other issues that often plague small nonprofit organizations. Many of the students indicated that they would continue to do volunteer work with their NPO after the semester ended. Most indicated that they were not considering a career in fundraising after completing their degrees, but knew that they were better prepared to serve as volunteers or board members in the future. However, there were a few who indicated that they were definitely interested in pursuing a career in fundraising and nonprofit administration.

In addition to undergraduate and masters’ level students, one doctoral student who was working as a development professional enrolled in the course. I utilized this student in somewhat of a teaching assistant role, having her review and comment on student work based on a grading rubric I developed. This provided me an opportunity to test the reliability of the rubric as well as to have another development professional provide input to the students. She was also required to do a literature review on a fundraising topic of her choosing instead of completing the assignments given the other students. I asked her to facilitate one class meeting, during which we were discussing a topic on which I knew that she was particularly well versed. Her involvement in the course was extremely valuable to me, especially in terms of ongoing evaluation of how the course was progressing during the semester. She, in turn, expressed her satisfaction with the course as an opportunity to review and reflect on the fundamentals of fundraising and her own work in fundraising, and to function in somewhat of a teaching role as she contemplated pursuing an academic career.
Challenges during the First Course Offering

One of the biggest challenges I faced was recruiting NPOs in a relatively short time period; as a first-time concept, the decision to offer the course was made later than is typical; however, that aspect of the time challenge is not expected to recur. Further, as a fairly new faculty member I was not yet connected with the community engagement and outreach resources that existed at my university as I began to develop the fundraising course and I had not considered how community outreach might become a part of my faculty workload. After I developed the course, I learned more about the university’s outreach initiatives and resources and made connections to others on campus involved in this area. I realized that the ideas I had for ongoing work with local NPOs in terms of the fundraising course and potential outreach would be a good fit for university community outreach and engagement efforts that were already established. For future course offerings, connection to these resources will give me access to a broad array of community contacts. Fortunately, the local United Way director was a long-time colleague and that contact proved to be invaluable for me. Going forward I plan to work more closely with the College office of Community and Civic Engagement as well as other contacts at the university level.

Student-focused issues that arose included how to assign students to NPOs and how to handle lack of student involvement in order to make sure that no organization was short-changed. Fortunately, only one student during this initial offering appeared to struggle more than others to produce quality work. I paired this student with one of the graduate students to work with the same NPO. Each was to do work separately and submit separate assignments, but they were asked to coordinate with one another to contact the organization and obtain the needed information. I preferred to pair a graduate student with an undergraduate student so that the organizations could benefit from receiving the breadth of information generated by the graduate students. In one instance, I had to pair two undergraduate students with one organization. In this case, I was concerned that the organization would not receive a full complement of assignments since undergraduates had to complete fewer than graduate students; to resolve this discrepancy I worked with the students to encourage them to consider submitting different optional assignments to their NPO.

One undergraduate student withdrew from participation in the course midway through the semester, although the deadline to withdraw without a failing grade had passed. I purposefully did not make the student-NPO assignments until after the drop-add deadline early in the semester to avoid having to make changes; however, this student simply disappeared from the course without any explanation. This particular student was not paired with another student, so the organization did not receive a final report; because of this incident, I will most likely always assign more than one student to an organization in the future.

Students expressed interest in hearing more outside speakers during the semester. In this initial offering I used two speakers: the United Way director and an attorney who was associated with the university development office and specialized in planned giving. This is an area that I plan to expand in the future so that students can hear from a variety of perspectives, including fundraising professionals, donors, grant makers and organization leaders.
Finally, I think that perhaps the area that can be most improved upon for the future is my personal contact and relationship with the partner NPOs. I remained in close contact with the United Way director and sought her assessment of the progress and input that she was hearing from the organizations. However, I chose not to contact the organizations over the course of the semester and allowed the students to be the point of contact. As I have read more in the literature about service learning, I recognize that inadequate communication between the university and the partner organizations has been noted as a common weakness in the field. In the future, I plan to cultivate a relationship with each NPO to the extent that I am able, and to touch base with organizations during the semester (perhaps at the midway point) and also at the end in order to allow them to evaluate their experience and the student work. Another approach includes inviting organization representatives to attend the final evening of the course when the students make their presentations. A variation on this approach is to have students present their final report to the NPOs prior to the end of the semester so that organization representatives could be prepared to ask questions during the presentation or even participate with students as presenters. One concern with extensive involvement of NPOs in the presentations is that students would not be able to speak freely about their experience and their impressions of their organizations, not all of which may be positive. I will give these approaches considerable thought and seek input from others who have experience working with local organizations as well as consult the literature on the subject.

Challenges and Opportunities for the Future

As I contemplate the future of the course, there are several issues that I see as challenges and opportunities. Enrollment should grow substantially based on the feedback and interest I’ve received from around campus as well as the limited availability of the course. The course was designed as a writing-intensive course and I think that it should remain so because this is a critical competency in fundraising. Writing-intensive work also increases the time commitment for faculty due to the extensive nature of most writing/revision processes. With larger enrollment and a writing component will come issues of ongoing recruitment of partner NPOs, determining the types of assignments that are most beneficial to organizations and students, working with larger class sizes, and working more closely with NPOs as a faculty member to determine individualized capacity needs for ongoing outreach and possible research. I am contemplating utilizing a group project approach for the future. This will require careful consideration about how the groups interact with their partner NPOs and how to make sure the work is equitably distributed among the group to maximize their opportunities for learning. One positive aspect of a group approach is that it presents an opportunity to model a team approach to fundraising that students will encounter in the “real world.”

Determining the NPOs that will be partner organizations is also an issue. The community is fairly small with a limited number of organizations in the immediate area. I could reach out to neighboring communities to identify new NPOs; this would enable me to use the same assignments that were used with the
first group of organizations. However, I also want to continue working with the NPOs that partnered with the university during the first course offering. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity to identify their needs and to determine how the course can be structured to help address those needs. Because these organizations have already received an in-depth fundraising analysis, I need to determine how to expand on that analysis in a meaningful way that adds value to the organization while also enabling the new students to develop the basic skills and knowledge that they should garner from the assignments. The mix of graduate and undergraduate students will dictate this somewhat; this may also present an opportunity for graduate students to do more advanced work.

Finally, one of the opportunities that I see is the ability to work more closely with the organizations to make sure that we achieve reciprocity in our partnership. In order to assure that the partnership is of value to both parties, I need to establish more routine communication with NPO leaders and spend time getting to know their organizations in order to identify capacity needs and opportunities for ongoing outreach and research. The student papers from the first course offering will provide me with a baseline evaluation of the overall development program for each of initial partner NPOs which I can use in my future outreach efforts with these organizations. As I move forward, any work with local NPOs must be done within the scope of my employment at the University and fit within the guidelines for university outreach as well as the work load expectations set for me by my department. I find this type of work to be exciting and fulfilling, probably because it most resembles the work I did prior to joining the faculty. One of the challenges is to pace myself so that I can avoid “over promising and under delivering” in my ongoing relationship with NPOs which would certainly be detrimental to the long-term viability of any outreach efforts.

**Lessons Learned**

The following are a few of the key lessons learned from this initial course offering:

- Existing fundraising efforts and success varied, but all partner NPOs needed assistance in either establishing or improving a comprehensive fundraising plan.
- The service learning projects were favorably regarded by the students who indicated that it greatly enhanced their understanding of the challenges faced by NPOs and their assimilation of the course material.
- The opportunity for students to receive feedback and revise their work contributed to an improvement in the quality of student work throughout the semester and enabled each student to produce a professional and comprehensive report to provide to their community partners at the conclusion of the course.
- Assigning two or more students to each organization can be beneficial in helping weaker students to complete the assignments in a professional
manner and can help insure that each NPO receives a full complement of materials regardless of student participation.

- Becoming acquainted with the community outreach initiatives that already exist on your campus can help faculty identify and contact potential partner organizations and in establishing or furthering outreach activities. Local United Way administration or community foundations could also be helpful in identifying and establishing relationships with NPOs in need of assistance with fundraising capacity development.
Chapter 6: The Emergent Life and Times of the Community Writing Center of Auburn: Developing Scholarship in Action at Auburn University

Tricia Serviss

The field of rhetoric and composition—for our purposes, think of it as the study of writing in all its form with special attention to education—uses the metaphor of turns to mark our past and present. We turned toward the idea of writing as a process in the 1960s. We turned to the idea that writing instruction had to deal with socio-cultural positionality of our students in the 1980s. There has been much talk recently of two turns in particular—the global turn (Hesford, 2006) and the public turn (Mathieu, 2005)—that have altered how we think about our research and teaching of writing in challenging and yet enriching ways.

These turns surely sound familiar to all scholars with interest in community-based research that puts our scholarship into action, regardless of our disciplinary fields. This discussion will focus on the public turn in rhetoric and composition in relationship to community-based research, emphasizing what such an orientation requires from contemporary writing scholars and writing teachers as a result. The public turn requires acknowledgement that: 1) writing instruction and writing cultures that we foster on university campuses have consequences beyond our immediate classrooms, and 2) there are many local narratives of writing and writing-based learning that are unique to individual communities. As the educational paradigms of the 21st century shift to account for new economic, digital, and transnational complexities, so must our sense of how, where, and why writing happens. To underscore this tension, I will describe my own efforts to conduct research about the kinds of writing that happen outside of traditional classrooms, workplaces, and institutional settings where writing has been measured in the past. In this chapter, I will describe some of the scholarship that contextualizes this discourse of extracurricular, or public, writing so that I can
situate the development of the Community Writing Center of Auburn that I founded in July 2011 and now direct as an ongoing outreach and research project.

**Precedents for the Study of Writing in Communities**

There are some helpful precedents for writing research focused on extracurricular writing education happening outside of K-16 classrooms we can evoke for inspiration and theoretical framing. There are longitudinal studies of writing practices that occur outside of classroom settings already, including Shirley Brice Heath’s ethnographic study of student lives outside the classroom (1983), Beth Daniel’s study of women writers within a recovery group (2003), and Beverly Moss’ study of sermonic writing in African American churches (2003). Their research projects concretize a tradition of studying writing as practices happening organically as a cohesive element in community building and the mobilizing of agency. These texts were revolutionary pieces of scholarship in two ways. First, these researchers recognized writing practices outside of familiar institutional settings as important and complex. Second, they adopted research approaches born from ethnography that engaged with community members as participants. Their research project design and orientation expanded the ways that scholars conceptualized the study of writing education. However, they are collectively limited, forming the beginning rather than the conclusion of a research trajectory inquiring about writing education occurring in communities. What they do not offer are suggestions about how we might interact with and bring educational infrastructures to bear on everyday writing in ethical, yet intervening ways in places where self-directed writing communities are not organically forming or succeeding for complicated socio-economic and cultural reasons. This is the gap in rhetoric and composition scholarship that I hope to address through my research with the Community Writing Center of Auburn.

Thus, I propose the following research question—how do we not only observe but also intervene in everyday writing in instructional and yet ethical ways? There are several national nonprofit organizations working on the practices related to this research question, some in relationship to higher education and others outside of it. Several patterns emerge when we browse through community-based writing initiatives that we need to consider as we work to establish them within higher education contexts. First, community writing projects generally take place in urban areas where social issues are tied to urbanity in familiar ways. Second, given this typical urban locality, local public resources of cities are regularly brought to bear on the writing project. Third, compact urban space helps in establishing the programs and fostering participation from the community. Fourth, reliance on urban infrastructure in general to create and sustain community-based writing projects is a major challenge to universities that emerge from rural, land grant contexts, such as Auburn University.

Some notable examples exist that illustrate this tradition and the challenges that rural land grant universities must confront when pursuing such community writing initiatives. First, the most appropriate example is the Community Writing Center (CWC) developed by the Salt Lake City Community College, which
required more than a decade of work. The CWC, described in a forthcoming monograph by founder Tiffany Rousculp, emerged from a writing course that partnered with local urban art projects. The fruit of more than ten years of labor, the CWC now exists as a storefront in the middle of Salt Lake City, attached to their famously busy public library, sitting only feet away from several mass transit stops. Their center offers rich and diverse programming, educational units, partnership with many community groups, and public services to provide writing education (Salt Lake City). While the center is meant to serve all ages, their staff reports that the majority of their programming serves children and young adults.

A second example, the 826 writing centers, provides different kinds of illuminating materials for us to consider. A national nonprofit organization founded in San Francisco in 2002 by best-selling author Dave Eggers, the organization established eight writing centers in large cities to serve students ages 6-18 by providing support for their writing education. The centers offer writing tutoring that helps students to succeed in school and to produce texts of self-expression. The centers also work with local schools to fortify curriculum and provide curricular support (826 website). They offer summer camps and publishing opportunities, and work to support writing across the curriculum. Their best practices are almost entirely based on the urban settings in which they operate and the pedagogical practices of teaching young people to use writing as a form of self-expression.

Similarly, the New City Community Press was founded as a medium for local communities to represent themselves in writing. Their primary mission is publishing everyday writers and circulating their work. They need other organizations to interact with the writers who are most typically children or adults living in residential programs. Programming seems to exist only around these two captive groups who exist with this specific shared context; they are in school or they live together for some particular reason.

These examples of excellent community-based writing initiatives rely on their urban contexts to establish their best practices in offering writing education outside of explicitly academic settings like classrooms. It is important to note what these community-based writing initiatives have in common as a sample of the kind of initiatives already in place in the domestic United States. Some of these shared features are that they: 1) form writing communities by proximity and age groups; 2) rely on shared space for the recruitment of writers and writing coaches; and 3) create deep diversity in both participants and writing experiences because their resources are not dedicated to gaining access for community members alone, but are also dedicated to program development. I must point out, however, that almost all of the writing outreach projects taking place outside of a very few selected examples in higher education are focused explicitly upon youth already involved with some kind of educational pursuit, leaving adults out of the mix entirely. This is a huge gap that the Community Writing Center of Auburn is working to fill as one of its initial priorities.

These examples illustrate a national trend toward situating the important work of writing education that happens outside of classrooms as separate from—or an optional supplement to—educational institutions. There is a division between writing education that is tied directly to schooling and all other,
seemingly less important, writing. This kind of hierarchy-based approach to writing and writing education is a major problem in that it negates what so much of our research in composition suggests about writing and our lives as writers. Our research tells us that writing education develops over our lifetimes through motivation from the different audiences, pressures, and technologies we encounter. Our models for writing education ought to account for this disciplinary knowledge. Therefore, I contend that community-based writing education is one promising way to meet this need.

Meanwhile, the majority of community-based writing education is coming from free-standing nonprofit organizations, from isolated service learning courses at universities, and from individual leaders on campuses across the United States with an interest in community engagement rather than explicit experts in writing and writing education such as me and members of my field working explicitly together to generate models and approaches for community writing instruction. These nonprofit avenues, while incredibly generative and encouraging, are just the start of what could be an important project in reconnecting writing education with writing that occurs in our daily lives.

The Development of the Community Writing Center of Auburn: Research and Inquiry

In July 2011 I began to work with a team of people brought together by our work with the Center for Arts and Humanities within the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) at Auburn University to consider how we might strengthen writing education in Alabama in pursuit of Auburn University’s land grant mission. We began to address what I see as a pressing need for writing education in the region by asking, how might a land grant university’s community writing initiative be similar to or different from the initiatives that already exist?

Initial research took us to the CWC of Salt Lake City Community College in July 2011, where I interviewed their staff about their formation, curriculum, assessment policies, and additional areas of interest. Based upon our trip, I began to formulate some of the key questions that I thought ought to drive the development of a community writing center in Auburn, given our context. I quickly realized that scholarship in action as explained by research communities in notable places like University of Michigan and Syracuse University required active praxis, moving between research questions, practices, and revision of each. Thus, I developed some guiding research questions to direct my own sense of praxis including: 1) how might the land grant mission inform the practices of a community writing center in a non-urban setting? 2) how might a community writing center at a land grant university address issues of space as questions about access to physical space—but also about much more? and 3) what will the role of partnerships be in this very particular non-urban setting?

These three questions meant that I could not found the CWC of Auburn with the best practices of the Salt Lake City CWC solely in mind. The Salt Lake CWC established a physical meeting space quickly in their first years, creating a vortex of participation from partnerships that already existed within the city because their urban environment required and afforded it. In contrast, under my leadership
the Auburn model would need to create partnerships from across vast physical space and consider mobility as a key asset in our non-urban setting.

Thus, one of the first principles of the CWC of Auburn was born as we designed programming in the spring of 2012—community writing initiatives must bring the idea of the writing studio to communities rather than being a writing center—a physical, stationary place—itself. This principle was confirmed as we offered a series of free workshops at various partner locations, including a public library, a Goodwill Career Center, and a church. The workshops themselves were not always well attended, but they accomplished the important work of establishing a partnership with a community group already at work and brought the idea of the writing studio to them. By writing studio I mean the idea that writing is an ongoing human activity (Grego and Thompson, 2008). Teaching and learning about writing happens as we write, not as we are told about writing or as we write in isolation. This notion—that writing is something that we do together—initially brought more stability and coherency to the CWC of Auburn than any storefront presence could have.

The second principle of the CWC of Auburn follows from this studio approach in the idea that writing instruction that happens in the community must be emergent. It must develop in spontaneous, collaborative, and recursive ways that make it seem unsustainable on first glance. Yet there are models we can use to foster and somewhat stabilize this emergence; development of these models are the main research priority that drives this project.

**Emerging Models: Current Best Practices for the CWC of Auburn**

Some notable best practices emerged as we began the work of emergent curriculum design. One year into the establishment of the CWC of Auburn, those best practices include:

1. Partner meetings to assess needs. A large part of these needs assessment meetings is deploying my writing expertise to translate the possibilities born from my discipline and research in ways that the community partner can understand and engage. Work with community partners is the beginning of the teaching component with the CWC of Auburn, and I am already engaged in teaching as I meet with partners and represent what writing instruction is and can be. At the same time, I am engaged in learning as they teach me about the needs, participants, and contexts of their communities that are sometimes foreign and unexpected to me. The staff of the CWC of Auburn (at this point one part-time former graduate student with expertise in writing education) developed CWC of Auburn documents to help manage these highly rhetorical encounters, including templates for e-mails, “plan of action” memos, confirmation e-mails, and workshop planning, and curriculum design. These templates, however, are of little use without the first inquiry meeting where mutual learning and teaching takes place.

2. Constant revision of partnerships and programming from a broad perspective. We should not assume that the learning moments are
primarily located in the workshops and learning events we organize. The primary learning happens across events as the CWC of Auburn influences the way writing is conceptualized and practiced by our partners and the community members they serve with our interactions. The learning is, as literacy scholar Deborah Brandt calls it, always translocal (Brandt and Clinton, 2002) and, I would add, always emerging from intentionally transversing the local as teachers and learners. For example, we have been actively partnering with a local Goodwill Career Center. Our interactions—along with the actual events we host there—have organically led to their reconsideration of their own materials and approaches in the career center when we are not leading a workshop or coaching clients, and vice versa. The partnership itself has great value as a kind of emergent learning experience, as I have come to call it, that a community writing center is uniquely capable of provoking. We don’t have the common, assumed context of classrooms and schooling to guide every learning interaction in a community initiative context. That is precisely why it is a uniquely valuable learning experience.

3. Presence can be virtual and physical. Community writing initiatives that cover a great deal of geographic territory, must consider their presence as equal parts physical and virtual. We established online manifestations of the center in many forms early on, hoping to make ourselves mobile. We also archived our materials online in accessible ways and developed a curriculum that takes advantage of our rural setting in the digital age, rather than mourn it. In many ways, we are drawing on the OPEN education movement as we provide greater and greater access to learning materials and experiences in different digital, freely accessible forms.

4. Draw on research resources at a research university. The first writing experts I deployed into the community to work on CWC of Auburn programming (notably workshops and individual writing coaching) were faculty from my department who study writing as an activity. I asked these researchers to share their expertise—both in the content and writing and the teaching of writing—by leading workshops we developed and stepping in as writing coaches at the community locations we had established. These writing experts were then shadowed by graduate students who learned in collaboration with professors. Soon, we will add undergraduate students to the mix, scaffolding community writing pedagogy through mentorships.

5. Develop curricular components to support research endeavors. Research projects like the CWC of Auburn create scholarship in action at a land grant university. The next phase of the CWC of Auburn is curricular support from the CLA and my own department that encourages students to consider the work that they do in the community as being based in scholarship, inquiry, and professionalization. As one next step, we will pilot writing coaching this fall, which we hope to transform into credit-bearing internships on the graduate and undergraduate levels.

6. Think through a kaleidoscope. I adopted a mosaic-approach to the CWC of Auburn early on as it developed within an interdisciplinary space in
the CLA. I approached seemingly unlikely collaborators and asked, how might we work together? This approach was most crucial in securing seedling grants (from Office of the Vice President of Research, Office of Outreach, and the CLA) that allowed me to develop curriculum, promote programming, recruit and prepare faculty and students, and, most pivotally, pay for a graduate student with some specialized training to deploy my plans and coordinate activities on my behalf as the faculty director.

These best practices were used in the first year of the CWC of Auburn to establish a robust, free Writing Workshop series in three localities (Auburn, Opelika, and Loachapoka), along with regular free writing coaching in both Auburn and Opelika.

**Conclusions**

The CWC of Auburn is a young enterprise, premised on experimentation with various approaches to community engagement and community-based learning experiences for all involved, including faculty, students, professionals in the community, and members of community organizations. The development of the CWC of Auburn itself is primarily a research project that asks how community writing initiatives, which frame an evolving research and pedagogical tradition in rhetoric and composition, might be best pursued in a land grant university in the 21st century as education embraces the public, or community-based, learning turn. One major facet of that research concerns how one develops such an initiative institutionally, disciplinarily, theoretically, practically, and financially.

While I cannot address all of these issues here, I can say that some of the best tools in dealing with this kind of research are found in conversations about the value of education—and its purposes—in this era. Just as I prepared to present this initial work in the “Scholarship in Action” conference at Auburn University in the summer of 2012, the *Huffington Post* published a provocative piece about such scholarship in action. The President of Wagner College, Richard Guarasci, wrote a two part blog entry for the *Huffington Post* entitled, “The Crisis in Higher Education: How Civic Engagement Can Save Higher Education” (2012). The piece outlines widespread worry among leaders in higher education that our campuses are threatened with irrelevancy. An educator himself, Guarasci laments this shift, but finds hope in engaged learning. He writes that he believes, “comprehensive and demanding civic engagement programs will help colleges and universities find new relevance, and communities regain economic footing and social rebirth in the midst of this crisis and a new kind of partnership is created between town and gown.” This argument that civic engagement will save higher education suggests that a return to emphasizing application—the useful application of what we know and teach—is the key to our own survival in higher education. Guarasci affirms what I think I am discovering as I work to develop the CWC of Auburn. My hope is that my own research project will help generate diverse approaches for this kind of work that might make this work of application
not just an augmentation to an active curriculum and research agenda, but perhaps a central way of scholarly being.
Chapter 7: Expressions of a BraveHeart: A University and Community Partnership
Strengthening Resources for Teens with Developmental Disabilities

Angie Colvin Burque, Danilea Werner, and Angela Ware

How typical is it to see teenagers with developmental disabilities in the pictures of a high school yearbook? How often do sound-sensitive autistic teenagers enjoy the chance to participate in a drumming class with their peers? How often do parents of teenagers with Downs Syndrome have the opportunity to sit in an audience and proudly watch their children perform? Even in resource-rich communities, the answer is rarely.

The Expressions of a BraveHeart Fine Arts Program (BraveHeart) was created in 2009 to address the needs of this population, specifically focusing on teens and young adults with moderate to severe disabilities. BraveHeart allows participants and their families to engage in social relationships and develop personal interests and talents comparable to typical developing teens. BraveHeart aligns with the objectives of Healthy People, a national initiative that looks for ways to reduce barriers of participation in home, school, work, and community activities by increasing the number of people with disabilities who participate in social, recreational, and community activities.

BraveHeart also aligns with the research about the needs to belong and to feel a positive sense of self, which are universal truths of the human experience. In early adolescence through young adulthood, these interrelated and interdependent needs become paramount to personal development. According to Erikson’s fifth stage of psychosocial development, adolescence is a time of exploring self-identity and developing a sense of self (Erikson 261). Most teens begin to explore self-identity through friendships, involvement in clubs, sports, and recreation programs, and the development of peer relationships (Murphy & Carbone 1057). Participating in these activities can enhance self-esteem, improve general health, and reduce stress and anxiety (Street, James, & Cutt 237).
Although teens with developmental disabilities may not participate in traditional school clubs and recreation programs, they do demonstrate similar needs for belonging and expansion of their social system. Unfortunately, their options are fewer, less varied, and they may require a caregiver to provide specific one-on-one assistance (Becker & Dusing 275; Murphy & Carbone 1059; O’Neil et al. 111; Rimmer & Rowland 142). Even in school settings, as these individuals grow and advance, their opportunities become more limited to experience consistent, structured activities that allow for the development and reinforcement of friendships, exploration and development of personal interests, and enhancement of belonging, growth in capacity, and accomplishment relative to the larger community become more limited (Becker & Dusing 276; Murphy & Carbone 1059; Rimmer & Rowland 144).

The following pages describe the development and implementation of BraveHeart, which aims to fill this developmental gap by providing a positive, supportive environment in which teens with moderate to severe special needs are paired with college students to participate in fine arts programming, establish and nurture friendships, develop the teens’ interests, and allow the teens to be active in the community.

**How BraveHeart Works**

BraveHeart is a semi-monthly, multidisciplinary program that operates through Auburn University’s (AU) social work program, university-wide service learning assignments, community volunteers, and the City of Opelika’s Therapeutic Recreation Programs. The core program involves a comprehensive fine arts course offering semi-monthly classes in art, music, and dance. At the beginning of each session, BraveHeart participants select two of the three classes to attend. The teens/young adults experience self-determination in deciding which class to register for during session A (30 minutes) and session B (30 minutes). Each class has two teachers, including one who has expertise in the specific discipline (art, music, or dance) and one who has experience working effectively with special needs populations. In addition to the semi-monthly classes, twice a year in Fall and Spring a special performance and art exhibit is held that is open to family, friends, and the community. One program aspect that is unique to BraveHeart, compared to other programs offered through community recreation centers, is that each participant is matched with a primary coach—an AU student volunteer—whose role is to facilitate maximum benefit through participation by providing one-on-one attention, support, and encouragement based on the participants’ individual needs.

**Program Development Step-by-Step**

BraveHeart began with the following program goals: (1) provide teens/young adults with special needs an opportunity to participate in an on-going arts enrichment program; (2) provide them with a setting that supports the development and maintenance of positive peer interactions, relationships, and friendships; (3) provide opportunities and experiences that assist college students
in understanding the strengths, needs, and abilities of teens/young adults with special needs; and, (4) enhance the community’s current offerings provided to youth with special needs by providing an innovative, quality arts program. The project proceeded in four broad stages which are detailed below.

**Step 1—Assess the Need**

Once the program idea and goals were solidified, the needs and interests of the local community had to be assessed. The program developer held a series of informal conversations with families of children with moderate to severe disabilities to assess their collective needs. The program developer also assembled a collection of observations and experiences through conversations with professionals in education, special education, health, and social work relative to the psycho-social needs of children and teens with these disabilities. This collection led to the creation of a tentative program proposal. The parents’ needs were then assessed in more detail. An informal information letter seeking feedback on the identified need and programming concerns was given to parents of children participating in a local summer therapeutic camp, asking if:

- they and their children would be interested in a fine arts program;
- pairing one or two college students to assist their children would be beneficial and/or acceptable;
- the tentative classes—art, music and dance—would be of interest;
- the 1½ hour time frame was manageable; and
- Monday or Tuesday evenings were preferred.

The results of the survey were conclusive. Parents of teens with moderate to severe disabilities were unanimously supportive of the creation of a program that features fine arts activities and provides a safe, “one-to-one” or “one-to-two” participant-to-coach ratio.

**Step 2—Identify Key Stakeholders and Community Partners**

A stakeholder is defined as any person, group, or organization that can place a claim on an organization’s attention, resources, or output or is affected by that output . . . . The key to success for public and non-profit organizations (and for communities) is the satisfaction of key stakeholders. (Bryson, 27)

Identifying all possible stakeholders is a critical and evolving process that begins with a consideration of the program’s initial goals. As a collaborative community and university program, stakeholders needed to be identified in both domains. A primary stakeholder for service programs should always be the population targeted to receive the service. Based on BraveHeart’s goals, primary stakeholders include teens and young adults with disabilities and their parents. The parents, other primary caregivers, and special education teachers of “self-contained” classrooms were identified to represent two perspectives: (1) as
persons to speak on behalf of some teens (i.e. those who were non-verbal, had limited verbal communication abilities, or those with significant cognitive impairment); and (2) as persons affected by the lack of and/or provision of a new community program for these teens/young adults. Other community stakeholders include special education teachers, general education teachers, community mental health representatives, community recreation center representatives with special attention to therapeutic recreation programs, and public and private family and child welfare agency representatives.

University-based stakeholders include social work faculty; the Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work department chair; and faculty from Special Education and Rehabilitation, Education, Kinesiology, and Nursing. Because BraveHeart was designed to be a service learning and civic engagement project, representatives from Student Affairs and social work students were also identified. Representatives from each of these stakeholder groups contributed to the development of the program’s design and implementation.

Step 3—Develop the Program Details

Program Design

A tentative draft proposal was developed for BraveHeart from parents’ initial comments. Stakeholders who might provide assistance with the structure of the program (for example, space, supplies, and students) were contacted and, after a brief description of the program design, asked to review the program proposal. Social work faculty were consulted for general feedback and program development advice as well as the selection of the most appropriate social work classes to include in BraveHeart’s role as a service learning assignment. Copies of the proposal were then presented to a variety of faculty and staff participating in community service/engagement for feedback; their disciplines included Kinesiology, Special Education and Rehabilitation, Special Education, Art, AU Transition Institute, and AU Student Affairs. Feedback was also obtained from community members including: Alabama’s Department of Mental Health, Children’s Services Division Director; East Alabama Mental Health, Family and Children’s Services Director; East Alabama Child Advocacy Center, Executive Director; Opelika Parks and Recreation, Therapeutic Recreation Program; and the Auburn Parks and Recreation Therapeutic Recreation Program. Most importantly, program design feedback was obtained from parents of children/teens with moderate to severe disabilities through special education teachers in Auburn’s junior high and high school.

Parental feedback was again unanimously supportive. The parents were most concerned with potential inconsistencies in AU student participation as volunteer coaches and the availability of the program after the first semester. To address these concerns, the plan was altered to guarantee that each participant would be paired with two students. This simple change greatly increased the possibility that participants would experience a consistent relationship over the entire semester, with student coaches becoming more familiar with the participants’ strengths and needs as the semester progressed. In addition, if one coach was late or not able to be present, the other coach would maintain the continuity of experience for the
participant. Also as a result of parent feedback, the Student Volunteer Orientation was designed with a strong emphasis on professional development, including the importance of timeliness, dependability, and consistency.

Faculty from Special Education and Rehabilitation and a state mental health representative both stressed the importance of self-determination and empowerment opportunities for teens/young adults with disabilities. As a result, the class sign-in sheet would be designed to allow more room for the participants to enroll in their selected classes. AU students would be trained (via orientation, modeling, and on-going feedback) to encourage choice, identify strengths, and foster the greatest level of independent action possible. These adjustments, based on collected feedback from stakeholders, resulted in a program design that was much more reflective of the needs and concerns of the target population while still remaining true to the program’s purpose and goals. All stakeholders were informed that the new program would require the acquisition of in-kind resources and that there would not be a charge for the classes, allowing for sustainability over multiple semesters.

**Identifying the Location**

Once the design was solidified, the program coordinator worked with the stakeholders to identify an appropriate location that had adequate space with enough room to accommodate the students, parents, and volunteers, and that was available on a consistent basis. The Opelika Parks and Recreation Department quickly responded to embrace BraveHeart as an offering in their Therapeutic Recreation Program. After a guided walk-through of the space, the location for BraveHeart sessions at the newly constructed Opelika Sportsplex was confirmed. A total of four rooms were reserved for bimonthly use to accommodate the preferred times and dates of the parents as well as the programming schedule of the Sportsplex.

**Confirming the Program Schedule**

BraveHeart’s session schedule was developed in consideration of the participants’ strengths and needs. While the official time was listed as 5:30–7:00 p.m. in marketing material, the first classes would actually begin at 5:50 p.m. to allow flexibility and sensitivity to difficulties in getting the teens to the program. Below is the confirmed time schedule:

- 5:15–5:45 p.m. Arrivals, Greetings, Class Selections and Community Time
- 5:50–6:20 p.m. Art Class, Music Class or Dance Class
- 6:20–6:50 p.m. Art Class, Music Class or Dance Class
- 6:50–7:00 p.m. Calming, Reunification, Departures

**Clarifying Expectations and Volunteer Roles**

All students and staff complete a mandatory orientation session that introduces the program, volunteer roles, expectations, and the overall purpose and structure of BraveHeart. During orientation the program coordinator explains the
program’s primary goals for each stakeholder group—teens, parents, and AU students. One of the primary goals of BraveHeart is to engage university students in a satisfying growth opportunity that expands their learning beyond the classroom. BraveHeart aims to increase student exposure to people with disabilities, a population traditionally defined as disadvantaged and vulnerable. Specifically, the program aims to increase the students’ (1) comfort and sensitivity level around people with disabilities; (2) willingness and skill to engage in communication with people with disabilities; and (3) desire to be an advocate for improved policies, programs, and services for people with disabilities. Students serve in a variety of roles including coaches, teachers, parent liaisons, and general staff. A full description of all primary staff roles is included in the required student orientation.

Step 4—Implement the Program

Participant Recruitment

Program flyers and brochures were created to provide general program information including the session dates, times, and location as well as the 2:1 coach-to-participant ratio. An open house was scheduled for interested parents and teens four weeks before the BraveHeart classes began. Its purpose was to provide potential participating families with an opportunity to meet coordinating faculty and a few of the AU students who would be participating as class teachers or coaches, as well as to experience the new space. If the parents were interested in enrolling their child in the program, they were given a short information packet and asked to return it with a completed registration form. The parents were also assured that the program had an open door policy, meaning that the teens/young adults could come as often or as little as was best for them.

Program Details

BraveHeart began in Spring 2010 with fourteen participants and thirty volunteers. To identify and recruit AU students as staff, the program was presented as a service learning and/or volunteer opportunity for Auburn University students. Students enrolled in SOWO 4060: Social Work Practice Methods I (Methods I) participated in BraveHeart to fulfill the course’s service learning requirement. Recruitment of other student volunteers was largely informal through announcements in Social Work and Sociology courses and student-to-student networking.

For our second season in Fall 2010, BraveHeart was incorporated in two Social Work courses as a service learning assignment—Methods I and SOWO 3800: Human Behavior in the Social Environment I. This addition was made to increase the length of the staff/participant relationship over two semesters in an effort to benefit participants by providing familiar and consistent support, and to benefit the potential learning experience for AU students.

Each semester the number of AU students and community participants that are involved in the program has increased. In season four, Spring 2012, BraveHeart included twenty-four teen/young adult participants and sixty-two AU student volunteers. BraveHeart volunteers have come from over twenty-five
university majors including, but not limited to: social work, psychology, human development and family studies, special education and rehabilitation, general education, nursing, chemical engineering, physics, and forestry. The teen/young adult participants have remained consistent with an approximately 80 percent retention rate.

Step 5—Evaluate the Program

Program evaluation is an essential element for continuous program improvement and sustainability efforts. Thus, program developers included an evaluation phase in the initial design of the BraveHeart program. The most critical evaluators of BraveHeart’s benefits and limitations are the parents of participants and the AU students; separate program evaluation surveys were created for each group and distributed to all volunteers and parents as they arrived for the last session and final performance. It was explained that the surveys were voluntary and would help the developer/coordinators continue to improve the BraveHeart program. The data were collected anonymously and compiled in aggregate; all parents and most students completed the surveys.

The program developers provided a follow-up response to the parents’ program evaluation feedback prior to beginning the next season. The note provided a summary of evaluative ratings and a brief review of the thematic areas of the open-ended responses. For example, after season one a parent stated that, although her child had a great time each week, she was unsure of her daughter’s exact experiences each evening due to her limited verbal and cognitive abilities. As a result, greater emphasis was added in the orientation to the coaches’ task of communicating to parents and caregivers about their teens’ experiences and strengths at the end of the evening session.

Outcomes

Data Collection Method—Parents

A program evaluation survey was administered to parents of program participants at the end of the Spring 2010 and Fall 2011 seasons. The survey included questions about program structure components and program goals. The parents were asked to rate their responses on a four-point Likert-type response scale. Open-ended questions were also provided so that parents could submit comments about the program.

Results—Parents

Parents reported great satisfaction with the BraveHeart program. Over 80 percent of the parents reported that their child attended at least five of the six program sessions. Although all classes were popular, the music class had the highest level of participation. Of the program components surveyed, all received good-to-
excellent scores from the parents of participants. These components included (where $\bar{x}$ equals the score out of 4 for each category):

- the overall quality of the program ($\bar{x}=3.59$)
- the quality of each class
  - music ($\bar{x}=3.65$)
  - art ($\bar{x}=3.12$)
  - dance ($\bar{x}=3.29$)
- the program location ($\bar{x}=3.76$)
- the day and time of the program ($\bar{x}=3.41$)
- and the program coaches/volunteers ($\bar{x}=3.94$).

The efforts of program coaches received the highest ratings, with 97 percent of parents reporting coaches as “Excellent.”

Parents also rated the success of program goals on a four-point Likert-type scale with 4.0 representing “Excellent” achievement of the goal. The ratings for all nine program goal accomplishments were consistently high, with only one falling below 3.0 in 2010 and none falling below 3.0 in 2011. Increased knowledge or skills ($\bar{x}=3.82$) and personal creativity and expression ($\bar{x}=3.82$) received the highest mean scores, while hands-on exposure to fine arts ($\bar{x}=3.65$), making friends ($\bar{x}=3.71$), and group participation ($\bar{x}=3.65$) also received high scores. In addition, 100 percent of parents indicated they would recommend the program to other parents. Their comments reflected various needs:

- “There is a HUGE need for this! Thank you so much! I thought it was well organized and the volunteers were caring, kind, and compassionate.”
- “Our children need every opportunity they can get to express themselves. Thanks for making this possible.”
- “This program is a social outlet that provides exposure to ideas not easily available elsewhere.”
- “My son can’t read and doesn’t watch TV. This program is a wonderful way for him to socialize and have an activity that helps him learn.”
- And statements about individual experiences:
  - “This experience expanded our child’s mind in new areas.”
  - “My son was able to go somewhere and just be himself. He was encouraged. I was encouraged.”

Data Collection—Students

A survey was administered to the student coaches at the conclusion of the BraveHeart program in the spring semester 2011. Questions consisted of participant major, area of interest in social work (for majors), reason for participating in BraveHeart, number of semesters they have participated in the program, and several Likert-type questions measuring their level of comfort and competency regarding work with people with disabilities.
Results—Students

Results indicated that 63 percent of students participated in BraveHeart as part of a class requirement while 82 percent were from helping profession majors such as social work, nursing, human development and family studies, and psychology. Over 11 percent of students had been involved with the program for three or more semesters, 33 percent had been involved for two semesters and over 50 percent were completing their first semester. In addition, over 90 percent of the students indicated that they were somewhat likely to volunteer with BraveHeart when not part of a course requirement.

Students were also asked about their comfort level and interest in working with people with disabilities. Almost all of the students (95 percent) reported that their level of comfort with people with disabilities increased after participating with BraveHeart. Over 50 percent of the students reported feeling somewhat confident in their ability to work with people with disabilities, while 44 percent felt very confident. In addition, 45 percent of the students reported that they are somewhat likely to consider working with people with disabilities as a career. Almost 90 percent of students felt that they were somewhat likely to encounter people with disabilities in future careers, no matter their future practice area.

Students also provided open ended feedback including:

- “I have never learned so much while I loved what I am doing, and I gained so much from personal interaction with these kids.”
- “This experience is probably the best thing I will take with me when I graduate from Auburn—seeing how a few hardworking people can make such a difference.”
- “It provided me the opportunity to see the person as an individual and not just a person with a disability. That is a wonderful gift I will take with me throughout life.”

Summary

In the beginning, the main goal of BraveHeart was to fill a gap in our community by providing a well-designed program for teens and young adults with moderate to severe disabilities. The developer was hopeful that a program framed by integrity, openness, flexibility, understanding, and respect could demonstrate success prior to obtaining major funding and monetary support. Families and potential participants did not want to wait for a grant request for a needed and desired but absent resource. Therefore, the developer moved forward without funding to complete a thorough needs-assessment that provided the foundation for the well-designed and much-needed Expressions of a BraveHeart program.

Initially, the program was started with only the in-kind donation of space by the Opelika Sportsplex, basic art supplies donated from Opelika’s Therapeutic Recreation Program, and a donation of books, craft materials, and a used CD player. During seasons two and three, the AU Student Social Work Club held restaurant fundraisers to benefit BraveHeart. These funds were used to support basic necessary items such as art supplies. As BraveHeart demonstrated its ability
to be a meaningful community program, in season three the coordinators began seeking internal funding and making plans to secure external funding. As that funding is obtained, future goals are to provide equipment for the greater normalization of the fine art class experiences (such as easels and various supplies for exploration of art mediums), glassless mirror panels for the dance class, and technology that can engage participants with various musical instruments.

Even with minimal financial resources, the developers refine and improve the program each season based on feedback and observations. For example, a successful singing class was added to the list of offered classes during the fourth season and became an instant hit with the participants. The final performance, one of the most important aspects of the program, has improved each semester. It has benefitted from AU student planning and involvement in creating backdrops and decorations. Also during the fourth season, a social work intern created a “Parent’s Corner” and newsletter to provide relevant or requested information about community resources for families with special needs members. The student orientation session has also been revised to provide more detail related to engaging and supporting teen/young adult participants.

BraveHeart is currently in its third year and is planning its fifth season. After the first season, the program benefitted from the addition of another faculty coordinator to assist the developer in planning, assessing participant and staff needs, matching coaches and participants, providing supervision, AU student development, and overall oversight. Since its inception, BraveHeart teen participation has increased approximately 30 to 40 percent with a core group of teens returning each season. In addition, the number of AU students/staff has almost doubled since the first season, with an increase of volunteers returning for multiple seasons.

The developers plan to continue the success of the BraveHeart program with increased attention to sustainability and interdisciplinary coordination. Specifically, the developers are looking to increase recruitment of participants as well as additional AU student volunteers. Strategies to increase the knowledge and training of volunteers will be a focus in upcoming seasons, as will the ability to create a stronger informal respite and support network for parents.
Chapter 8: Molding Minds: Community and University Seek Equal Partnership through Language Studies

Jana F. Gutiérrez and Gilda Socarrás

The College of Liberal Arts at Auburn University launched its Community and Civic Engagement (CCE) Summer Academy in 2008, with the goal of encouraging faculty to develop courses with civic engagement/service learning opportunities. As a result, Gutiérrez and Socarrás, two faculty members in the Foreign Languages Department, used their expertise to engage their students with a community outside the confines of Auburn University and to link that experience to their curricular goals. The purpose of this essay is to present their two service learning case studies related to Spanish language learning and Hispanic culture that emerged from their efforts, showing how these projects became transformational experiences for all involved.

In 2008, Professor Socarrás created the Closing the Gap (CTG) project to engage Auburn University students with the Hispanics in the Auburn/Opelika area through English as a Second Language/US culture classes, and in 2010 Professor Gutiérrez developed the Unidos en Voz y Acción/United in Voice and Action (UVA) project with the goal of engaging her students with the elderly community in the same area through similar classes. On the surface, these two projects might seem unrelated, but as the professors discuss, they have more similarities than differences in that both were completed in the conservative southern town of Auburn, Alabama, incorporated stereotypes about “the others,” faced parallel challenges, and had comparable outcomes. Furthermore, by coming together in this discussion about civic engagement from the disciplines of literature and linguistics, the professors participate in what Jacques Berlinerblau states is the future of humanities in the 21st-century America, “engaged humanism” or the ability of thinking outside of one’s own particular field of specialization to reach a broader audience (2010).

The authors hope this essay might serve as a reference point for professors, particularly those in Foreign Languages or those interested in Hispanic culture,
who might ask themselves why they should serve. On a broader level, they aim to open a multidisciplinary dialogue about the new role of instructors in higher education.

Two Case Studies

Unidos en Voz y Acción/United in Voice and Action: Language Learning with the Elderly Community (Gutiérrez)

Unidos en Voz y Acción (UVA) began in 2010 as a multigenerational service-learning component for the Spanish Conversation with a Service Learning Component course (FLSP 3030). The basic concept was for Auburn University students to forge a partnership, through Spanish language and Hispanic culture, with older adults who lived at the Azalea Place Retirement & Assisted Living facility. Gutiérrez’s proposal for the CCE academy grant prompted her to lay the groundwork with Azalea Place’s Marketing Coordinator, Sybil Haughery six months before Gutiérrez attended the CCE academy the summer prior to implementing her program. Two Spanish majors accompanied her to Azalea Place for the first meeting with Haughery. They emphasized the idea of mutual collaboration and equal input from everyone—students, faculty, and community partners—for they intuited the need for cooperative decision-making. Later, the CCE academy reinforced this attitude; indeed, Gutiérrez’s project benefitted immensely from hearing her colleagues’ (including three Spanish professors, one of whom was Socarrás) successes and failures with their own service learning endeavors first-hand.

The students in FLSP 3030 had all completed the elementary and intermediate Spanish courses; however, as is customary with any classroom, a marked distribution of proficiency among the seventeen class members was present. Two students were identified as heritage speakers, meaning they had grown up in bilingual households but had received little formal education in Spanish prior to entering university. Four of the students entered the classroom with a remarkable degree of fluency that was mainly obtained through study abroad, a natural inclination toward oral communication, or prior community service or part-time employment within the Hispanic population. The remaining students had sufficient skills to maintain conversation in Spanish with a sympathetic listener but were lacking confidence in their pronunciation and overall fluidity, with the main barrier being a lack of vocabulary combined with limited understanding of implementing grammatical structures into everyday conversational situations to express themselves precisely and with self-assurance.

FLSP 3030 was announced in the online catalog as having a “service learning component,” so students were already aware of this additional requirement. A poll taken during the first day of class indicated that 98% of the students had selected the FLSP 3030 course for that particular reason.

The course required students to fulfill a minimum of ten “Spanish in the Community” hours. They could select from either volunteer work or non-philanthropic events that were conducted primarily in Spanish (i.e., a religious
service, salsa class, Hispanic film festival, or scholarly lecture), as long as a majority of the hours corresponded to actual community service. They documented each experience by filling out a reflective “Fuera del aula” (“Outside of Class”) worksheet in Spanish for each activity. The worksheet included the following categories: general description of the activity, linguistic knowledge acquired, cultural elements appreciated, a favorite moment, an uncomfortable moment, personal reactions, and some sort of physical documentation—a photo, video, pamphlet, or similar handout—to represent the experience. This written journal culminated in an oral report, in the form of a digital audio recording or video montage that asked each individual to compare their autonomous educational experiences as a whole, underscoring the difference between learning Spanish in the community as a student outside the classroom versus as part of a community that they helped create—one that eliminates the border separating university campuses from the rest of the world. In short, they went from sheltered students to responsible global/local citizens. Each student far surpassed the ten-hour “Spanish in the Community” commitment, with the hours spent volunteering holding the clear majority.

For the first month of the semester, students spent class time establishing a knowledge base and preparing themselves to work with senior citizens. This allowed students to get to know one another, form a cohesive class bond, and also build their skill set and confidence levels in speaking Spanish. Some of these exercises included presenting an oral report about their grandparents, conducting group interviews with elderly native-Spanish speakers, analyzing print and video advertisements geared toward older adults, and questioning the terminology used to describe aging in Spanish. Students watched a 2001 short film from Spain entitled *La Yaya* (*Grandma*) by director Juana Macías and a 2010 full-length Costa Rican movie, *A ojos cerrados* (*Blindly*), directed by Hernán Jiménez. These featured plots in which young Hispanic adults struggled to come to terms with the life choices of the generation that preceded them while portraying senior actors as complex protagonists. The month spent analyzing cultural attitudes toward persons of age 65 years or older equipped the students (ages ranged from 19-22 years) to enter the retirement and assisted living center as educated citizens and gave them the appropriate vocabulary in the target language for talking about that experience with confidence.

Initially the FLSP 3030 students and instructor focused on two content-driven objectives. Their first goal was to provide rudimentary Spanish conversational education for the Azalea residents and the second was to widen the residents’ knowledge of Hispanic culture. This meant teaching them the basic courtesy expressions involved in social greetings and good-byes. The residents would be able to introduce themselves using present tense verbs, solicit information from their interlocutor, identify common areas of interest, and end the exchange courteously.

After the residents were equipped with elementary grammar and vocabulary, the class focused on culture, learning that music and food were popular topics. They were able to describe their likes and dislikes of different Hispanic songs and dishes, while also appreciating the heterogeneity of Spain and Latin America. Many of the residents had a background in music and relished the chance to
educate their student conversation companions on the rhythmic differences between an Argentine tango and the Colombian cumbia. Jessica, a student, played Cuban composer Ernesto Lecuona’s “Malagueña” on the piano for two Azalea Place residents: Zeke, a retired piano professor, and Ernestine, a graduate of the Juilliard School who regaled the class with tales of her former big band radio show.

By far the most celebratory moments occurred at the end of the five-week course when students and residents took restaurant field trips to Cuban Delights and Laredo Mexican Grille. With the help of their student-teachers, the Azalea Place learners were able to place orders entirely in Spanish at both dinners. Overall, the class realized how many common bonds they had with the residents, whether at superficial or profound levels. Gladys, a former newspaper editor from Azalea Place, inspired Tameka, a journalism student, with her memory of being an intrepid female reporter during the Cold War era. Jason, a student who struggles with various learning challenges, felt a kinship to Clyde, who didn’t let Alzheimer’s disease get in the way of his proudly requesting a frosty beer on each of the outings. The Azalea Place learners came to understand that their fellow resident, Hortencia, could help them roll their Rs. Most importantly, everyone came away with a greater appreciation for the language learning process, more sensitivity toward the Latinos in their midst, and the knowledge that the generational divide need not inhibit a bond formed through common experience.

The community, student, and colleague feedback related to this program overall attests to a growing interest in expansion for initiatives like UVA. Gutiérrez’s course evaluations for the pilot semester included some of the most positive comments and highest ratings she had ever received in her eleven years at Auburn University. She regularly receives e-mail updates from students who were enrolled in the course and have since graduated, and many of them still actively use Spanish in their communities and pursue volunteer opportunities. Three of the students now work in the medical field, two are enlisted in the military, three are pursuing master’s degrees in Hispanic Studies or Foreign Language Education, three are in the private sector with international companies, and two received employment with the AmeriCorps national service program. The others likely still experience the ripple effect of their learning adventure in the fall of 2010, like when they hear Beny Moré’s ballad, “Cómo fue,” one of the Azalea Place favorites. It could be when they order a combo platter at a local eatery and remember how the 98-year-old Azalea Place resident carefully ordered her dinner in perfectly acceptable Spanish. It is quite easy to measure student success through exams and graded projects; however, students are not the only ones who benefit from this program. Gutiérrez’s multigenerational foreign language experiment has served as the basis for conference presentations in Atlanta and Canada, which suggests that conference participants can carry the success story all over the globe. Editors from three different journals have already expressed serious interest in receiving manuscripts derived from this type of endeavor, and such encouragement inspires any scholar eager to share their research. Haughery has mentioned that she too would like to generate some research based on this project for publication in one of her field’s caregiver journals. Gutiérrez is indebted to the College of Liberal Arts’ Community and
Civic Engagement Initiative for facilitating this discussion via its Annual Partner Luncheon. The community-university partnership can too often seem one-sided and limited to activities in which representatives go out into the community; this luncheon spurring dialogue and interaction.

In the past two years, UVA has grown into an ongoing cultural and linguistic exchange, meaning one that is not tied to any one course, between Auburn University’s Spanish language students (both undergraduate and graduate) and Azalea Place. Since 2010, Gutiérrez has relied only on student volunteers to continue the activities, though she has tried to tangentially link the different events to the courses assigned to her that semester. When her courses from 2011-2012 were mostly advanced literature and translation courses, she helped to launch the Club de Lectores Book Club to read abridged versions of Hispanic literary masterpieces that had been translated into English. In this way, UVA has enveloped at least three Elementary Spanish sections, two Intermediate Spanish sections, and an additional five advanced undergraduate and graduate sections. Gutiérrez fondly remembers the poignant moment when Demetrius, a freshman feeling the stings of first heartbreak, could commiserate with Freida, an Azalea Place widow, over Chilean poet Pablo Neruda’s love poems; sitting at the same table was an Spanish graduate student who had that same day peer-edited a term paper on Neruda’s poem in Gutiérrez’s FLSP 7050 Literary Criticism and Theory graduate course.

This pilot program could be duplicated in a wide variety of residential settings outside the university. Of course, one must work closely with the community partner so as to adapt to the specific circumstances of each location. Gutiérrez wants to reach out to other retirement centers in the Auburn area, which would expand UVA’s impact. Auburn continues to be recognized nationally as an ideal retirement location, as evidenced by Smart Money magazine’s listing of the City of Auburn in its feature story of best places to retire (Hill, 2012), which may indicate additional opportunities for growth of this program.

Closing the Gap: Language Learning with the Hispanic Community (Socarrás)

The CTG Project was also constructed in response to the College of Liberal Arts’ first Community and Civic Engagement (CCE) summer academy in 2008 to create opportunities in the community for student engagement and reflection. However, this initiative resonated at a more personal level. As an educated Hispanic working and living in the United States, Professor Socarrás has always been interested in getting involved with her community to promote a better way of life, but never knew where to start or how to fit this goal within the busy schedule of a junior faculty member. The Academy provided an initial platform; most importantly, it compiled a group of faculty members with the same goal of being agents for change in their communities. As part of the Academy, she revised her syllabus for FLSP 7090 Introduction to College Level Spanish Instruction for use in the following fall semester to include a service-learning requirement.

In the fall semester of 2008, Socarrás started CTG, with the dual objectives of teaching English and US culture to the local Hispanic community with
graduate students majoring in Spanish as educators, and exposing graduate students to the Spanish language and culture in this community. Her earlier understanding of the gap between local Hispanics and American society was 1) that Hispanics in the area were not integrating into US society because they lacked English communication skills and a basic understanding of US culture and 2) that Americans did not understand Hispanics who lived around them. This gap translated into Hispanic daily life through difficulty navigating basic survival tasks such as talking to employers or seeking medical care. With this understanding, she created a model of how and where classes would take place. Classes lasted for an hour each week at a local church and included fifteen-minute lessons on the English language and US culture, team-taught by graduate students and one-on-one conversations with the Hispanic students about the topic of the day or another topic of choice.

This model debuted on the first day of classes of the fall 2008 semester. First, Socarrás informed students who had entered the Spanish Master’s Program and were enrolled in the FLSP 7090 Introduction to College Level Spanish Instruction teaching methods course that one of the course requirements was to teach English to members of the Hispanic community during one evening per week (she will refer to their reactions in the challenges section). At this point, she had a list of possible churches to use as meeting locations but had not yet contacted them. One of the graduate students approached her after class with the idea that a local church (Iglesia Vida Nueva) serving the Hispanic community might be interested in the project. Socarrás and the student met with the pastor and agreed that classes would take place once per week in one of the available community rooms. In this meeting, they also learned about the educational background of the Hispanic community which varied from no schooling at all to an elementary education. This information set the tone for the class content. One major adjustment made was to the course methodology; since these were not traditional students, the communicative language teaching approach used at Auburn University would not work (i.e., the approach in which students study language structure and vocabulary at home and use language to communicate during class). These students needed to be exposed to more repetition, hands-on practice with specific structures, and one-on-one conversations to clarify any particular points, and would not be able to complete homework or study to support their learning experience.

Socarrás and her graduate students next generated lesson plans, keeping in mind that this community needed English for daily survival; some of the topics were greetings, medical visits, asking for a raise, and conversations during the holidays. During the first academic year (2008-2009) of the project, pairs of graduate students prepared fifteen-minute lesson plans per semester in PowerPoint presentation format and were required to attend all community class meetings. From an educational standpoint, the process of preparing the mini-lesson for this population gave graduate students another opportunity, in addition to the university classroom, to develop their skills in material selection, preparation, and presentation. However, this model required close supervision of lesson development in terms of clarity, language, and appropriateness, because the majority of the graduate students had no prior teaching experience. They were
also asked to keep a weekly journal about their experiences as teachers in the Hispanic community.

The first year of the CTG project was a learning experience for all of those involved. Class meetings were initially planned to last one hour per week, but the Hispanic students had so many questions that it was impossible to keep meetings shorter than two hours. Also, attendance was unpredictable; during some classes there was a ratio of three Hispanic students to fifteen graduate student teachers, and during others there were twenty-five Hispanic students and fifteen graduate students. Moreover, Hispanic students attending a class meeting did not necessarily return the following week. To keep frustration at bay, the mantra for this project became “flexibility.” The class continued this community service with the understanding that they were working with non-traditional students who were doing the best that they could. Nonetheless, several adjustments were needed as the program intended in order to make the program feasible for all involved.

First, graduate student teachers continued to work in pairs to prepare and teach one mini-lesson per semester, but they only had to attend two additional community classes. This change freed up graduate students’ time and also ensured that Socarrás would have three graduate students present with her per lesson. One of the pairs of students was in charge of leading the lesson that they had prepared and a third student attended to help with the one-on-one tutoring part of the class.

Second, the following fall semester Socarrás expanded the project to include undergraduate students taking one of her courses (e.g., FLSP 3020: Spanish Syntax). These students were required to attend ten community classes out of a total of fifteen and serve as English tutors for Hispanic students. Like the graduate student teachers, they maintained a weekly journal about their experience with the Hispanic community. For Socarrás, this experience with the undergraduate students proved very rewarding because she could actually see a transformation in some of these students throughout the semester; for some this occurred in the course of a single meeting.

One student had never had the opportunity to use Spanish outside of the classroom. Early in her participation in the project, she was afraid to talk to the Hispanic students. However, after a couple of meetings, she enjoyed the project, comparing it to a study abroad experience. Indeed, involvement in this project gives the student an opportunity to be immersed in the Hispanic language and cultures without leaving the US.

Another undergraduate student was uncomfortable the first time the students worked individually with Hispanic students to practice the skills from the meeting’s mini-lesson. At first he did not want to sit by the Hispanic student, saying that he did not know what to do. The Hispanic student asked him, “Do you know English?”, and he smiled. Then she said, “That is all you are here for, to help them with English, your language!” He sat unwillingly by the Hispanic student, showing with his body language he was still uncertain; however, by the end of that meeting, he was facing the Hispanic student and smiling. After a year of being part of CTG, the student states to have good memories from that experience.
Overall, CTG classes continued successfully in terms of participation of the Hispanic students for over three years. The creation of the CTG Student Club expanded the scope of the project to reach the whole student body. The club remained very active on campus for a couple of years, bringing guest speakers to campus, organizing discussion panels on controversial issues such as immigration and hunger, and informing the university of all events on civic issues taking place in the area. Furthermore, through CTG, graduate student teachers, undergraduate students, and volunteers organized a food drive, worked as tutors/translators in local schools, created a bilingual reading hour for children at a local library, and served as translators in a medical office.

CTG stopped for a time when the Alabama Immigration Law, HB 56, was passed in 2011. This law requires public schools to check students’ immigration status, criminalizes giving an undocumented immigrant a ride, requires employers to use E-Verify to check potential employees’ status, and instructs police to check the immigration status of anyone they stop if they suspect the person of being an undocumented immigrant. This law made it illegal to help the Hispanic community in any capacity in 2011.

In the spring semester of 2012, the CTG initiative was put into action again, with some variations because of the immigration law hurdle. In Socarrás’s Spanish Conversation course, students were asked to participate in two service learning activities of their choice with her approval. This proved to be a positive experience even though it did not involve the Spanish language. Some students worked at the local chicken processing plant as volunteers, others worked at the community market, while others chose to work at the food bank. Students also continued the ESL classes and expanded service learning to the Loachapoka School System (in an adjacent town), which has a large Hispanic population.

What about the gap? It has taken Socarrás several years to clearly understand this metaphor. Her current understanding is that we are all part of the gap, which is not static but dynamic. Civic engagement occurs when we manage to come together to learn through mutual understanding and acceptance. Yes, there was a gap on the part of the Hispanic students and also on the part of the Auburn University students and their view of Hispanics in the area, but there was also a gap within Socarrás’s perception of the impact of civic engagement and its potential role as a catalyst for change in all directions.

Challenges

Any faculty member involved in civic engagement knows that surmounting obstacles form a part of the educational process. Professors Gutiérrez and Socarrás connected and evolved as teachers and scholars through their shared experiences in the community, even though from the outset they viewed their programs as different from one another. Mostly they saw each other through the challenging moments, which were plenty, for that is what they do as academics: identify and solve problems in hopes of greater understanding. Concerning their students and community learners, the professors experienced the following shared troubles: sacrifice of their preferred methodology, cultural expectations about the role of professors, lack of appropriate teaching materials, and frustrations while
recruiting both students and participants. They continue to struggle with how best to translate civic engagement into their individual research agendas, find a suitable outlet for disseminating that scholarship, and receive validation for that output in the annual review and promotion process.

Gutiérrez and Socarrás strive for a communicative approach to language learning. This pedagogical style de-emphasizes explicit grammar instruction, robotic memorization, and reliance on translation in favor of authentic cultural contexts, true-to-life situations, and meaningful linguistic exchanges, primarily in the target language regardless of the learner’s proficiency. Gutiérrez recalls a moment during UVA in which her pedagogical foundation crumbled. Gracie, a student well-versed in Spanish phonetics, chose to reframe the Spanish verb quiero (I want) for her Azalea Place conversation partner. Rather than just repeat the verb within a sentence that Bob could actually use in a dialogue pertinent to his daily life (for example, “Quiero un café”/ “I want a coffee”), Gracie used English equivalents, telling Bob to combine the words “key,” “air,” and “oh.” This explanation violates the very tenets of the communicative methodology. Nevertheless, the trick worked for Bob, who from then on not only pronounced the verb correctly but also used it properly in a sentence to announce that he wanted to play poker.

In today’s 21st-century classroom, instructors and learners rely heavily on multimedia technology to make instruction more realistic and entertaining. The luxury of an erudite academic philosophy and the generous university resources at their disposal on campus soon became evident when the professors ventured off campus. They had no other choice but to seek a 2.0 version of their existing pedagogical models if they were to overcome such barriers. CTG’s church hall and Azalea Place’s common areas could hardly compare to Auburn’s fully-equipped classrooms. Additionally, the professors could not expect their community partners to make the same economic or time investment of a typical university student. These examples represent only a few paradigm shifts that challenged their creativity and evolution as instructors.

The community partners also encountered challenges not to be ignored. While each received the professors with open arms, other pressing obligations or impediments bridled their initial enthusiasm. Professor Socarrás’s Hispanic students, for example, are working at physically demanding occupations; they need greater English fluency in order to facilitate their integration in society, yet do not have much free time to devote to their studies. Understandably, work and family commitments always came first.

Each of the community partners also held similar cultural attitudes toward the teacher-learner binary and prioritized the teacher role, which placed a heavier burden on the professors. Whereas the professors had envisioned their students spearheading the community classes, neither the partners nor the students immediately embraced that call to action. This was disconcerting since it contradicted the professors’ aforementioned philosophy. Any student ranked as advanced in their Spanish program is accustomed to an energetic and interactive class experience. How discouraged the professors were, then, to see their students initially hesitate to assume an active partnering role when conversing with their community partner; this was especially disconcerting for Socarrás, whose
graduate students are in training to become elementary Spanish instructors at the college level. Gutiérrez and Socarrás thought they could lay the groundwork with the program and then rely on the students to take the initiative out in the community, but this was not the case. The students looked to them for constant feedback on every activity because they were not confident enough in their skills to assume a leadership role. These particular community partners also held conservative views about education and so, were also leery of anyone but the faculty professor being in charge; as a result neither the students nor community perceived their symbiosis as learners, in which they could cooperatively teach each other.

Creating educational materials for use in their campus and community classrooms presented yet another impediment. People learn a language best through actually doing something with that foreign tongue; it is not enough to contemplate or parrot unfamiliar words. While pleased with Annie R. Abbott’s *Comunidades: más allá del aula* service-learning Spanish textbook, Professor Gutiérrez still had to modify one aspect of the book’s approach—it is geared only to working with Latinos (Abbott, 2009). All of the role play situations, readings, and interactive dialogues primed language-motivated college students to interact with an immigrant population, rather than with American adult learners.

Both professors faced a literacy barrier as well. Many of the CTG learners had received scant formal education even in their native tongue, which was not always Spanish. Socarrás could not simply adapt her Elementary Spanish materials development philosophy for an ESL learner, and neither the graduate nor the undergraduate students had a strong enough background in Foreign Language methodology to be assigned the daunting task of generating reliable lesson plans from scratch.

Another major barrier Gutiérrez and Socarrás faced was recruitment within the community. Regular attendance by a consistent number of participants was never the norm for either project. Scheduling conflicts or miscommunication occurred between their contact supervisors at the church and retirement center. On more than one occasion, the professors would show up after a long day on campus with their group of students only to find that the contacts had forgotten to announce the session. It was pointless for fifteen students to seek a meaningful exchange with only two community participants. Gutiérrez had an advantage because UVA participants actually lived on site at Azalea Place, but even then she found herself sometimes having to recruit on the spot, either making announcements in the dining hall or knocking on regular attendees’ doors. Socarrás could not have as realistically carpooled around town picking up her Hispanic participants. By the late afternoon or early evening, there was less enthusiasm than there might have been for an earlier meeting, but these were never possible because of our students’ class schedules. In the end, everyone had to make the choice of whether or not to show up. The burden of elucidating for community and students the intrinsic value of regular commitment fell on the professors’ shoulders, making them intermediaries between the two worlds.

Gutiérrez and Socarrás agree that their civic engagement initiatives—though rife with inconveniences, daunting tasks, and risky expectations—are worth the extra strain on their workday. They also concur that the most frustrating crucible
is how their peers and superiors view this activity. The department did welcome promoting the professors’ endeavors on its website in an effort to “capture diversity.” Gutiérrez and Socarrás were reminded to “document” and “measure the impact” of any outreach activity through conference presentations and publications. However, departmental mentors cautioned them not to let these programs detract from their “publish or perish” climb up the tenure and promotion ladder. And too often, they heard the quips “distraction,” “fluff,” or “unrelated to your scholarly agenda” made in reference to their projects, at least at the departmental level. All the while, higher administrators praised their efforts as “innovative” and “in line with the University mission.”

Even when faculty guidelines exist, as is the case with the Auburn University Faculty Handbook, they lead to ineffective results if not followed consistently. Chapter 3, Section 8-C of the Handbook states, “Demands for quality in outreach are the same as in teaching and research/creative work; however, outreach activities are different in nature from other activities and must be evaluated accordingly” (“Excerpts,” 2012). It then refers to Appendix 1 of Faculty Participation in Outreach Scholarship: An Assessment Mode, a five column by five row chart that includes categories related to scholarship and breaks them down into four major groupings (“Excerpts,” 2012). The table’s square columns and rows, though well-intentioned, mimic what the professors as faculty members have felt—we are quite literally boxed-in. It is a rigid and either-or situation, rather than the fluid, interdependent web championed by Kevin Michael Foster, who offers the following advice in “Taking a Stand: Community-Engaged Scholarship on the Tenure Track”:

Community engaged scholars would do well to come to terms with the current academic realities and then steadily work to co-create possibilities and conditions (through contextual interventions, structural interventions, and finally structural transformation) that will allow for something different, and, from the standpoint of community-engaged scholarship, something better (2010).

Cooperative teamwork is the key concept here, for assessment of any civic engagement initiative must also include feedback from community partners. No systematic measuring tool exists for gauging the pros and cons of their participation and they are the most vulnerable since most university outreach programs target small agencies without the institutional framework and support inherent to a university. If university civic engagement aspires to give a voice to community, community concerns should not fall on deaf ears—community should also be fully involved in the evaluation process and become co-collaborators in assessment.

Some clear examples of civic engagement scholarship exist in the field and the professors can encourage colleagues to look to these. For example, George Washington University professor Dolores Perillán, who specializes in Spanish American poetry, has married poetry and civic responsibility for over twenty years in her Poética 21, Word in Action course (2008). Gutiérrez has yet to fully
integrate poetry into the UVA program, but the Club de Lectores Book Club she established in 2012 has set the groundwork for that development.

It has also been challenging for the professors to find evidence of the impact of their work. Gutiérrez and Socarrás looked to the body of scholarship related to programs like theirs in an effort to define benchmarks. Although promising, Hispanic-related civic engagement scholarship typically focuses on urban populations with large Latino communities, e.g., Los Angeles, Salt Lake City, and Columbus, Ohio (Bergerson & Peterson 2009; Guillén 2010; Tinkler 2010). Most studies focus on youth mentoring programs, not the adult learning featured with CTG and UVA. In fact, adult education (academic instruction, not social or health education in the broader sense) receives little attention in this literature. Tinkler mentions her Communities in Transition program, which provides English as a Second Language instruction to immigrants, mainly from Mexico and Central America, while also striving “to explore ideas for ways in which they could have greater voice in city affairs” (2008). Her project does seem to share a similar foundation to Socarrás’s CTG in that it is set in “a small rural community with a rapidly growing immigrant population.” However, again Tinkler works “in a western mountain town,” and her emphasis on her own community-based research does not include any university student service learning component (2008). Therefore, none of the Latino community-based programs can realistically compare to CTG. Gutiérrez and Socarrás were unable to find studies that included information about providing language instruction to older adults; if a similar model for UVA exists, there has certainly been no scholarly dialogue based on it.

Academic departments can be resistant to change and this can be discouraging given the contrary views expressed in work such as Educating for Democracy, whose authors underscore the magnitude of academic freedom in arguing that, “Academic freedom means that faculty are granted wide latitude to formulate and express opinions, including controversial opinions, toward the goal of high-quality scholarship, which is recognized to depend on intellectual exploration, integrity, and creativity” (Colby et al., 2007). Gutiérrez and Socarrás’s experience with respect to this challenge can serve as a teachable moment for Auburn University and for other academic institutions strengthening their commitment to civic engagement. They perceive a major disconnect between the enthusiastic support and training they receive from those in higher administration and the lackluster response from some peers and immediate supervisors.

Since the professors subscribe to the philosophy that scholarship demands action beyond the hallowed walls of the ivory tower, they are determined to stay strong in molding the minds of their students, community partners, and when necessary, skeptical colleagues. As Syracuse University Chancellor and President Nancy Cantor remarked in her 2010 keynote address to the Association of American Colleges and Universities Conference on Faculty Roles in High-Impact Practices, “[I] want to make the case that civic engagement is not one more thing on the plate. It is the plate” (2010).
Conclusion

These related case studies aim to break the silence Gutiérrez and Socarrás have encountered during their experiences regarding designing the projects, presenting them for consideration in furtherance of their careers, and providing the actual community service. Ironically, the constituencies served by these community partners are not the only muted voices clamoring to be heard. Their students constantly demand more practical applications from their humanities instruction; they all want to test their knowledge of Spanish in an authentic environment, and studying abroad, while a popular choice, does not have to be the only option. Their feedback from course evaluations and post-graduation updates is valuable and should not be ignored. Auburn University scholars and teachers curious about and committed to civic engagement also should feel welcome to participate in an ongoing open academic forum through workshops and colloquia that have the potential to stimulate their research and teaching while broadening the impact of their community-based activities. As language instructors, Gutiérrez and Socarrás know that real communication requires an exchange of words and ideas, not just unidirectional speaking or listening. Battistoni, Longo, and Jayanandhan expand on this notion of global citizenship, “[B]uilding a robust civil society through . . . common local actions actually play an important part in the international network connecting the local with the global. This happens when reciprocity is at the core of these relationships” (2009). This collaborative spirit must be present at every level of civic engagement.

Gutiérrez and Socarrás feel confident in the success of their ongoing community-university language learning programs and hope that sharing their experience with the academy will help bring more scholarly attention to civic engagement in their common field of Spanish language studies. They believe that they learn more about their specialized fields through exposing more diverse audiences to the subject matter. Taking their expertise beyond the traditional university classroom—their typical test ground for creative scholarship—stimulates further thinking on the subject, while also empowering disenfranchised learners. The molding of minds transforms into a melding of knowledge and thought processes.
Chapter 9: Cross-Integration of Community, Research, and the Classroom: Extensions of a National Evaluation

Mitchell Brown

In this essay I discuss the interplay between applied research, community organizations, and the academic classroom. The experiences are drawn from my work as co-principal investigator on a funded evaluation of a federal agency grant program. The program under evaluation was the Rural Pilot Program (RPP) which was initiated through the Bush administration’s Faith Based Initiative Program through the Office of Violence Against Women within the US Department of Justice. The community organizations that were evaluated were known as community-based and faith-based organizations and the parameters of these organizations were specified within the grant program guidelines. I worked on this project before joining the Auburn faculty in 2006, and conducted the work from 2006-2009 for the Institute for Community Peace (ICP), a national organization that aims to transform community by changing the structures that cause social problems. ICP integrates practice, research, and innovation to support a broad audience of local and national partners. ICP’s structural change model places community will as the central driver of structural change and supports equal partnership among community and the larger domains in which they are embedded in the resolution of enduring social problems.

The Rural Pilot Program (RPP) provided grants to community-based and faith-based organizations to support domestic violence services in rural areas around the country. The evaluation included three components: a process evaluation (led by Andy Klein, PhD, Advocates for Human Potential), an examination of the value-added of the faith component (led by Mark Small, JD, PhD, Clemson University), and a study of organizational capacity, which I led. The results of the evaluation have been well documented elsewhere (see Brown 2008; Brown 2012; and Klein et al 2009), but what has not been discussed is the interplay that occurs in projects like this between the university and the
community as well as the interplay within the university setting between faculty and students.

To describe this interplay, I explain a number of interactions. These include how students informed the research process; how the research process, results, presentations (including a presentation at a White House conference on the Faith-based Initiative), and publications have been used to informed teaching in multiple classes; and how both of these dimensions speak to and support community organizations. I begin with a brief description and interpretation of the project, including basic background information, followed by a discussion of the roles that faculty, students and community organizations played. Next, I discuss outcomes for the community. Finally, I conclude with personal perspectives and reflections on the project.

Description and Interpretation of the Rural Pilot Project

The RPP represents one of many Bush Administration faith-based initiatives in which the administration hoped to enhance the provision of human services across the country by expanding federal grant-making to faith-based as well as community-based, typically non-profit, organizations. This effort extended earlier initiatives established by the Clinton administration in its Charitable Choice provisions signed into law between 1996 and 2000. Broadly, Charitable Choice, reflected the recognition that the process of moving national-level functions and programs to the state and local levels required consideration of the vast array of services provided by charitable and community-based organizations which are typically nonprofit and sometimes faith-based. The growing need for community-based and faith-based human service provision is a consequence, at least in part, of devolution, the process of moving what have been national-level functions and programs to the state and local levels.

As originally established, Charitable Choice was limited to the work of four federal programs including Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, Community Services Block Grant programs, programs for substance abuse and mental health, and Welfare-to-Work programs. Under the Bush Administration interpretation of this initiative, Charitable Choice was expanded across the federal bureaucracy and provided grants to community- and faith-based organizations to deliver services to people in a variety of service areas.

The RPP focused on services to victims of domestic violence, and provided small grants over a one-year period to community- and faith-based organizations to provide services to victims in rural areas around the country. RPP used what is known as intermediary model, in which grants of government funds were made to larger, typically national or state organizations who in turn issued grant funds to local organizations. Typically, these intermediary organizations were also responsible for providing training and technical assistance to these local groups to enhance their capacity for current activity and, theoretically, make them more competitive when applying for federal grants into the future.

Under this model, 54 faith- and community-based organizations that received awards through the RPP provided an array of services, which ranged from shelter, food and clothing to counseling and legal advocacy. Within that group, the faith-
and community-based organizations themselves received additional support from the intermediary organizations in a variety of areas including operational support for programs and support for organizational capacity including things like board operations and support, fundraising, recruitment and management of volunteers, and accounting. The subsequent evaluation of capacity showed modest increases in capacity for the organizations that were funded as compared with those that were not and also showed some differences between the faith- and community-based organizations.

**Faculty Role in Research and Teaching**

My role as a faculty member in this project took on integrated forms of research and teaching. As a researcher, I designed a study to measure differences between community- and faith-based organizations and to measure change in capacity over time between the organizations that applied for funding and received it and those that did not. I also created the instruments that would be used in the study to measure organizational capacity and developed the research protocols and processes that would be used for data collection. I collected data through typical research methods including site visits and case studies, focus groups, surveys of organizations, and document collection. I analyzed these data and used my analyses to prepare scholarly research papers for presentation at conferences, to write and edit reports, and to write articles for publication.

As a teacher, I brought the project into several of my classes from 2006 to 2009 to provide real-world examples of the concepts and skills that these courses are expected to impart. The project provided a timely illustration of practical problems in policy design and implementation, research design, and measurement and data analysis. I also brought some of my best students into the research process by training them to process and analyze data and supervising their work.

To incorporate the process and findings of the evaluation of the RPP into my courses, I used issues that came up during the data collection phase of the study to teach undergraduate students in American government about the bureaucracy and policy process, and about some civil liberties issues. I also used examples from the RPP to teach Master of Public Administration (MPA) students in a course on Program Evaluation the skills needed to write grant proposals, read grant reports, develop program logic models, and design evaluation studies. Finally, I used the actual data collected from the RPP evaluation in doctoral research methods classes to teach students about levels of measurement, units of analysis, and various statistical techniques.

The process of working with students as research assistants was more complicated. Most students desired course credit for the work, and so I worked with the chair of my department to create a three-credit hour course on applied research. In this course, students entered into a contractual-like agreement with me at the start of term that established the parameters for their work and my involvement. This agreement included the number of hours each week they were to work; when we would meet to review their work; the background reading they needed to complete before starting the work (which included substantive reading on the topic and methodological readings on the analysis procedures); their
expected deliverables and respective due dates; and the grading methods I would use. My assessment standards usually involved a combination of timeliness of and quality of completed work, and the expectation that students could re-do work that did not meet my standards. This explicit expectation of student revision is a principle that reflects the nature of applied research and the practices that I follow and teach about this type of work; essentially, applied research is necessarily an iterative process and students should not expect to necessarily perform tasks correctly on their first attempt. In some cases, students chose to volunteer their time in exchange for a strong letter of recommendation for graduate or law school, and though I worried that these students would be less reliable than those that worked for course credit, they were in fact equally motivated and thus equally responsive and helpful. In all but one case, the students that worked as research assistants on this project have gone on to law school and graduate school, and the student that did not works for the government in a research and investigative capacity.

Student Roles as Learners

Student interaction with my involvement in the RPP cast them as both passive and active learners. As passive learners, they read about the project and heard me lecture about the issues surrounding the federal program and how to study it. As active learners, students also engaged with the RPP through a project-based learning approach; here, as active learners, students created logic models, designed their own studies, analyzed the data, and wrote mock grant proposals. Throughout, most students succeeded in responding to the assignments. They also enhanced my skill as a teacher and researcher through their questions and discussion about assignments; they helped me refine my thinking about both teaching and research and challenged me to produce better research by pointing out (often correctly) flaws in the design and instruments I created, and by making suggestions for other ways to approach data analysis.

The Role of Community

In order to discuss the role of community in the RPP, it is necessary to first define the concept of community. This definition presents a challenge; communities can be based on many attributes including geography, ideology, identity, and interests. The university itself is actually part of myriad communities. It is housed physically in a geographic community but the reach extends beyond that single geographic location through students and faculty. Students often live close by but frequently hail from other geographic communities, extending the university-as-geographic-community across states and countries. Its faculty members and administrators are part of national and international professional communities of interest, and personally are part of many communities of ideology and identity. The research enterprise also extends the idea of the university community. Faculty research efforts are often not local, and the substantive focus of the research may not be local either.
For the RPP, the concept of community included dimensions of geography, interest and identity. The geography of the RPP was demonstrated by the programs in different localities spread across the United States. The interests of the RPP were focused on human service provider organizations and those that study such programs. The identity of the RPP focused on victimization and movement to overcome oppression at the individual level, and facilitating this type of change at the organizational and government levels. Ideology did not play an explicit role in the development of the community of interest in the RPP, however ideology did become apparent at times because of the nature of partisan politics.

These dimensions of community played multiple roles in the project. A subset of the community of service-provider organizations played a role in data generation as they were the subject of study and evaluation. The larger community of service provider organizations, at least theoretically, can benefit from the results. Various organizations and individuals in the community of interest played a role by providing different types of feedback on the results of the study. This feedback came in the form of public questions and comments at the White House Conference on the Faith-Based and Community Initiative on Research, Outcomes & Evaluation and other academic conferences, and in the form of blind peer review of reports and articles.

Across all the dimensions of my work on the RPP evaluation, faculty, students and community can be seen as stakeholders in the research-education-outreach interplay. Interactions between stakeholders can be both direct and indirect. Within the university setting, the faculty member provides instruction and assignments to the students, and the students can become, if properly motivated, involved in the research process and part of a mutually supporting dynamic. Administration plays an indirect role in this relationship by providing support to both faculty and students. The faculty-member-as-researcher works with community, in this case community-based organizations, to collect data, and then feeds information from the study back to the community. The students return to various community settings after graduation, hopefully better prepared to serve those communities through the skills that they have acquired and the information that they have learned. In some cases and for some stakeholders, these interactions deepen over time as well and become part of an evolving relationship.

Outcomes for Community

The outcomes for community from this project are seen in three key areas. First, student learning from the interactions around community-based research and the applied research process produces a body of residents and citizenry that are more knowledgeable and by extension also better-prepared future leaders. Much of the feedback that has been provided about using the RPP as the basis of work in classes has been positive, particularly in Program Evaluation. Illustrative examples of relevant student comments in response to the question, “What aspects of this class contributed most to your learning?” include statements such as: “The practical real world perspective of Dr. Brown and the varied approaches
to collecting and analyzing data presented in the readings and lectures,” “I really like that she has practical experience in the area she is teaching,” and “The practical application.” A second outcome for community that results from this approach comes from the research itself: the information from the RPP evaluation and capacity study itself can be used to inform policy decisions such as how and where to provide government funding or intermediary support for local program efforts. Last, the applied research here also provides us with ideas about how to improve our practices around supporting different areas of organizational capacity and functioning, particularly for groups providing human services. These outcomes are important in the long term as contributions to our understanding about how policy works best. These outcomes are also important in the near term for organizations and communities that seek support for the work that they are doing; although the Obama Administration has not promoted faith-based funding in the same way that the Bush Administration did, funds remain available to eligible organizations, and many states continue to support these initiatives.

Personal Perspectives

This project highlights what I believe scholars-teachers in university settings ought to be doing, particularly at land-grant institutions. We ought to be involved in the production of knowledge; we ought to be training our students about the complexities of our society; we ought to be training our students to be critical consumers of knowledge, and our better and interested students to become producers of that knowledge through graduate study; and we ought to provide the broader community with benefits from our research itself as well as benefits from the skills and knowledge acquired by the students we educate.

The RPP and its interactions also help to highlight what we ought not do. The first mistake is to see the university setting as separate from the community. The university is an integral part of multiple and overlapping communities, however we define them, and as such we have a responsibility to those communities. The second mistake is to view the arrow from the individual scholar to the community as pointing only in one direction, in which the community is simply a source of data. We conduct research with, not on, community organizations and members in what ought to be a reciprocal relationship. If universities and faculty do not understand the invaluable contribution made by the community within the research process, and instead perpetuate the myth that people with advanced degrees are superior, academic researchers will remain outsiders, limiting both their future access to community as well as the credibility of their work products and institutions, and ultimately limiting the influence we can have as we attempt to support community processes. At the same time, there is a careful balance in this relationship, and researchers must attend to the risk of having seemingly neutral research questions, processes, analysis and interpretation being unduly influenced by biased stakeholders. The third mistake we make is as seeing students as recipients of knowledge, and not as partners in the knowledge production process. Students at all levels provide critical feedback to the scholar-teacher through their comments, questions and criticisms, and faculty members need to be attentive to this feedback. In addition, faculty do students a disservice
by not involving them in an active research agenda, either simply through lectures or more in-depth through training in the tools of data collection and analysis.

My evaluation of the RPP and the ways that evaluation have been used in instruction and research is an example, albeit an imperfect one, of the symbiotic relationship between the university and community and within the community setting. The task of university administrators ought to be to encourage and support similar projects. The task of faculty ought to be to continually involve themselves in applied research efforts with their students. The task of students ought to be to embrace information and opportunities as they arise. And the task of community ought to be willingness to engage in these projects, as well as to push back when researchers approach such projects in a one-sided, as opposed to reciprocal, manner.
Chapter 10: Defining Best Practices: Engaging the Community Perspective of Success

Kathleen Hale and Ryan Hankins

Most every form of community and civic engagement will interact with at least one nonprofit organization in some way or another, as the projects and experiences highlighted in the previous chapters well illustrate. This essay steps outside the context of a specific university-community project to examine a key dimension of the architecture that is used to prepare students for civic engagement, specifically, the content of education aimed at preparing students for staff and leadership roles in activities conducted through nonprofit organizations. A central dimension of the current discussion about nonprofit education in academic circles involves the development of competency-based, or skills-based, curricula. The results of this discussion will have considerable influence on the experiences that students encounter in this aspect of the community and civic engagement curriculum, which has universal application for engagement. We extend that discussion outside the university proper to examine community perceptions about this conversation. We discuss here our findings about the opinions of Alabama nonprofit leaders about nonprofit education programs and what these opinions suggest for the competency movement and for university-community relationships, and the delivery of community and civic engagement through academic programs.

By way of background, our interest in nonprofit education programs is both professional and personal. It stems from our deep engagement in various areas of the nonprofit enterprise as executive leaders, advisors, and board members over many years, and our mutual desire to support better understanding of the unique role and space of the nonprofit institutional form in American public life. Both of us have worked “on the inside”—and Ryan continues to serve as the executive director of a nonprofit in Alabama providing first line services to individuals and families who live in highly challenged circumstances. Both of us pursued higher education to be able to contribute further to scholarship in the field of nonprofit studies—Ryan is a PhD student at Auburn and Kathleen serves on the faculty of
Auburn University where she directs the MPA Program and initiated a graduate certificate in Nonprofit Organizations and Community Governance. Both of us are involved in teaching others in higher education settings—Kathleen has been designated an Engaged Scholar in the College of Liberal Arts at Auburn University for her work, and Ryan is preparing to teach and serve as a regular guest speaker in university courses.

We begin with a brief discussion of nonprofit organizations within the broader notion of community and civic engagement, and an outline of the national competency discussion as it has been characterized through the activities of key national professional associations. Next we present and discuss the opinions of Alabama nonprofit leaders. We close with our summary observations and recommendations, which we hope will contribute to the continuing conversation.

Nonprofit Organizations as Vehicles for Community and Civic Engagement

The vibrancy of the nonprofit sector is a fundamental dimension of civic health and the ability of faculty and students to engage with community. Considerable community and civic engagement of faculty and students occurs through interaction with community organizations that are institutionally constituted as nonprofit organizations. In addition, where engagement occurs around new ideas that have no formal institutional “home,” community representatives and university faculty or students often explore whether and how to form a nonprofit organization in order to provide a stable base from which to proceed on their projects. Students across the community and civic engagement curriculum at Auburn University have been bitten by the bug to start their own nonprofits, and more than a few have already done so. In fact, nonprofit organizations can be viewed as an essential element of community and civic engagement, for faculty and students alike. Nonprofit organizations act as “hosts” for internships and service learning requirements, and as the primary vehicles for community change and innovation.

Nonprofit organizations typically are formed to advance a charitable mission or to raise public awareness around the need for social and/or policy change. These nonprofit organizations provide fertile ground for engaged scholarship across the range of applied research, service learning projects, internships, community capacity building, and civic professionalism. Nonprofit organizations are distinct from government agencies and for-profit enterprises and have particular governance, organizational, and operating characteristics. Students in particular are drawn to the mission focus and the passion associated with nonprofit organizations as well as volunteer opportunities for service and leadership, but have little or no training in, or understanding of, the ways in which these organizations must operate by virtue of their distinct role in public life. The study of nonprofit organizations is well-recognized as an essential aspect the study of the work of the public sector and is fundamental to understanding community and civic engagement. Nonprofit organizations have long been the basis for specific curricula in courses such as Nonprofit Management,
Fundraising, and Board Governance, which are typically found embedded in the graduate public administration curriculum in MPA (Masters of Public Administration) programs and may also appear in schools of business and in other units (Bowman and Thompson 2013).

Nonprofit Education Programs and the National Competency Discussion

Not surprisingly, as universities and communities reach toward one another, the content of nonprofit education programs has become the subject of considerable stakeholder interest. Some of this interest is generated by leaders of community organizations who see universities as resource pools that can help their organizations build capacity. This support takes many forms, including student and faculty volunteer service, community program design and evaluation research, community needs assessments, fundraising assistance, and much more. Other interest in nonprofit education programs is generated by universities who see leaders of community organizations as a potential source of revenue through continuing education of some sort. This interest has fostered graduate certificate programs in some universities, with the goal of attracting mid-career nonprofit staff as new students.

Yet another source of interest rests with stakeholders housed in universities and in communities that serve as gatekeepers with regard to curricular quality, and may also be involved with setting educational standards and conferring accreditation. For universities, the typical example is the national academic accrediting group (or groups) that review curricula against various standards. For communities, the typical example is a state organization comprised of member community nonprofit groups that wants to provide its members with services to enhance capacity at the organizational level. Some of those member services inevitably involve training and professional development for nonprofit staff and governing board leadership.

Both groups of stakeholders have a vested interest in nonprofit leaders and managers who are well-prepared. Across this university-community continuum of activity, these various stakeholders are engaged in looking at the same sorts of questions—What are we doing? Are we doing it well? What do we need to do in order to meet future challenges? In nonprofit education, multiple projects are underway at the national level of higher education to clarify and understand the extent to which university programs provide students with skills and abilities that community nonprofit organizations need. This conversation is part of a broader discussion that is occurring throughout academia, where there is a concerted push towards identifying and quantitatively measuring what students are actually able to “do” when they complete their degrees. While the push towards “metrics” and measurable “skills-based outcomes” is not new, it has certainly increased as colleges and universities face difficult questions from parents confronting ever rising tuition costs.

Within this broader movement, competency-based learning in nonprofit education is on the agenda in each of three major national professional associations that focus on nonprofit education (Hale and Hale 2013). These
organizations include NASPAA, the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (until 2013 known as the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration), ARNOVA (Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Associations), and NACC (Nonprofit Academic Centers Council). Broadly, the approach focuses on identifying key values and principles of nonprofit education and linking these to student outcomes including specific skills that students can demonstrate. Competencies thus reflect the knowledge and understanding that we expect students to acquire in our programs.

Through links to particular learning outcomes, competencies also reflect what students know how to do with respect to essential nonprofit organization functions. This ability to demonstrate skill is critical for students who want to work in these organizations; it is not enough to be passionate. In the current conversation about capturing the most appropriate content within nonprofit education programs, there are at two general and competing schools of thought about how to demonstrate what students are able to do. A broad, functional approach suggests that we might expect to see competencies described around common elements of nonprofit operation and governance such as mission fidelity, financial viability, resource stewardship, fiduciary responsibility, accountability to stakeholders, transparency, and collaborative governance (NASPAA Nonprofit Section 2013). By way of contrast, competencies can also be designed and expressed to describe particular skills in greater detail. In this more detailed approach, we might expect to see competencies identified in terms of a student’s ability to run a board meeting, evaluate an executive director, prepare the Form 990 annual information return, manage volunteers, evaluate a community program, write a grant, or develop a fundraising or issue advocacy campaign. Within this ongoing dialogue, competencies are not a prescription for particular curricula but rather are developed by programs within the context of their individual program missions and the characteristics of the students and communities that they serve.

These conversations within national professional associations about competencies and how they will be defined and used matter a great deal to the future of education about community engagement, given the unique and powerful role of these groups in creating information that drives significant institutional change and innovation (Hale 2011). The results of these conversations are critical for nonprofit organizations as well. The recession has delayed the 60-75% turnover in nonprofit leadership that had been projected by several national studies to occur before 2010 (e.g., Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations); however, a recent national study of nonprofit executive leadership reports that one-third of nonprofit executive directors expect to leave their jobs within five years and more than double that number are considering leaving during that time (Cornelius, Moyers, and Bell 2011; Adams and Stark 2002). This generational shift compounds the turnover that already exists across the ranks of nonprofit executive directors. In every community, executive leaders, governing boards, and communities are concerned about who will fill those gaps and the skill sets that will arrive with them.
Opinions of Nonprofit Leaders

To understand more about how community leaders view the move toward developing specific skills or competencies in nonprofit education, we draw upon original data obtained during interviews of fifteen nonprofit leaders conducted in Alabama during 2012. We limited our conversation to the state because we cannot consider scholar/community engagement in the abstract; as scholars and practitioners based in Alabama’s institutions, we are engaged, interested, and invested in Alabama communities and the nonprofit organizations that sustain them. Although limited to Alabama, the single-state focus does not appear to impose constraints on our thinking about nonprofit education programs; at least eight universities in Alabama currently provide some sort of nonprofit offerings, ranging from continuing education courses to NASPAA-accredited MPA programs. These universities are located throughout the state and range in enrollment from more than 30,000 students to fewer than 1,500 students; the group also includes private, public and land-grant institutions. On balance, we believe that our findings can be understood and applied in relation to other locations and can provide guidance for understanding and enhancing this aspect of the university-community partnership.

We selected our respondents with purpose, beginning with one person well known to one of us and using the common snowball sampling technique; in this process, each person interviewed is asked to suggest others who could contribute to the conversation. Each person interviewed is an established, respected opinion leader in the Alabama nonprofit community and each is recognized within the Alabama nonprofit community as an important resource in the nonprofit community, serving as a convener, an advocate, or volunteer. In some cases, but not most, our opinion leaders were also currently serving as executive directors. We stopped at fifteen interviews in part because of the inevitable time constraints but also because we had begun to reach a saturation threshold as respondents suggested names of those already interviewed. Auburn University’s Institutional Review Board approved this research project and our research protocol, which allowed respondents to remain unidentified in any reports of our findings. All respondents chose that option and so it is not possible to acknowledge them individually; however, we can note their remarkable passion and dedication as leaders, executives and board members on behalf of organizations around the state.

We posed a number of open-ended questions to these leaders that ranged widely about a variety of topics important to those who work in and lead the nonprofit sector. Here, we focus on their opinions about the role of graduate education in preparing future nonprofit employees, the skills they found most important (and lacking) in employees both as new graduates and at mid-career, and the role and value of internships and service learning components. Our synthesis of their comments suggests themes that we organize here around concepts, content, and systems.
**Concept Themes**

Nonprofit leaders see a crucial role for higher education that focuses on the nonprofit field. For a working professional, a graduate degree can be an important signaling device for advancement and for skill building. There are significant barriers to quality graduate education for practitioners that include tuition, distance, and time commitment including time away from work responsibilities in environments that are inherently challenging and intense. Distance education methods may reduce some of these costs, but typical distance methods lacking a significant component dedicated to face-to-face interaction raise questions for these leaders about program legitimacy and value. Some nonprofit practitioners may also experience reluctance to engage with college students (culture shock and intimidation were mentioned in these interviews) but do find high value in peer-to-peer exchanges. For students without work experience in the nonprofit field, internships can provide an important bridge toward understanding the distinctive culture, mission, and work ethic of nonprofit organizations generally; far too often these experiences fall short of their potential because they are poorly designed and poorly executed.

**Content Themes**

Nonprofit leaders believe that students need to enter the nonprofit arena with a clear understanding of the role and limitations of government initiatives and the private sector in order to understand the unique space that nonprofit organizations occupy in public life and within communities. One essential aspect of all nonprofit organizations is that they arise to fill gaps in communities (whether local, national, or global) that are not addressed by the political decisions that dictate government policy. This suggests that students need a clear understanding of political systems and public administration principles. Moreover, students need broad exposure to societal systems and the major areas of nonprofit work including health care, education, social support services, poverty alleviation, environmental protection, and economic development. Students also need broad exposure to the arts and arts organizations. Together, these topics support the value of a broad liberal arts education as a platform for community and civic engagement, which may actually run counter to the current “competency-based” emphasis—at least, it requires careful consideration of what competencies and skills truly mean.

Nonprofit leaders reported consistently (and not surprisingly) that nonprofit work is rarely linear and solutions to community challenges are not formulaic. As a result, communities need students that can gather information from a wide range of sources, write clearly and in various forms, analyze complex situations, and think creatively. Communities also need students to understand processes of community building including collaboration and networking, consensus, and needs assessment as well as the concepts of effectiveness and efficiency (which are not the same and which serve very different ends). Students also need management tools and leadership skills, and respondents pointed out that these are not the same. Broadly, leaders also reported that students need to understand
the culture and values of the nonprofit world, which involves much more than simply volunteering time, donating to a cause, or conducting a fundraising event (although all are important dimensions of this work).

**Systems Themes**

A bias for “real world” experience prevailed among those interviewed, as did a bias against instruction in the field from academics without practical experience. These nonprofit leaders expressed frustration about working with credentialed but inexperienced young (and new) employees as well. Nonprofit leaders find invaluable the practical community-based experiences provided through curricula that link students to their organizations, e.g., internships or long term projects that span multiple semesters and/or courses, if these experiences are executed thoughtfully and in collaboration with the organization. However, all too often nonprofit organizations encounter students who need to serve as volunteers simply to fulfill a service hours requirement in a course. Serious, long-term, meaningful internships and similar arrangements appear to hold real value for nonprofit leaders. By contrast, “hit-and-run” service learning experiences appear to actually downgrade the value of the academic experience in the eyes of those interviewed. Students come to such experiences with rather romanticized views of charity and “giving back,” but are often unprepared to accomplish anything beyond a very superficial exposure to an organization and its mission. Broadly, those interviewed also expressed concern that nonprofit education may not actually contribute to building capacity in the sector but instead serve primarily to increase enthusiasm for “start-ups” of new nonprofit organizations.

**Closing Reflections**

These interviews provide several important insights for our understanding of community and civic engagement that involves nonprofit education programs and the broader community in higher education that is considering establishing skills- or competency-based curricula in these programs. First, the responses of nonprofit leaders suggest a disconnect between the university and the community in terms of how nonprofit education is offered to those practicing in the field, and in how students engage with community through nonprofit-focused courses during their education. Our interviews do not uncover a magic formula for program design, but do suggest that the nonprofit community must be involved in articulating how programs will be delivered, if we intend those programs to deliver value to practitioners. This finding aligns with recent scholarship on the importance of collaborative models in designing curricula in graduate education public service. A recent issue of the Journal of Public Affairs Education highlights a number of initiatives that reflect the need for, and value of, collaborative work between university faculty in particular and community stakeholders (for internships, Benavides, Dicke and Holt 2013; for long-term community partnerships, Simon, Yack, and Ott 2013; for service learning and action research, Stout 2013). Second and related, the interviews suggest that it is essential for nonprofit education programs to impart to students why nonprofit
organizations exist in communities and in public life. Grounding in broad liberal arts courses along with strong communication and analytical skills are equally as important as learning particular skills related to management practices or leadership models, for example. Finally, nonprofit leaders clearly communicated the high value that they place on their own lived experiences gained by working in the trenches of service and advocacy in pursuit of mission. They do not expect newly minted graduates to arrive with a similarly deep level of understanding, but they do expect an awareness of, and respect for, the value of the role that nonprofit organizations play in community life and the challenges that their organizations have faced in delivering their various missions.

The goal of the competency initiative in nonprofit education is, broadly, to arrive at agreed-upon definitions, interpretations and assessments of curricula in order to graduate students qualified to participate appropriately in and with the nonprofit sector. This goal is both admirable and necessary. However, as this study illustrates, that goal will ultimately be accomplished not by agreement within the academy alone but through correlation of this synthesis with the real concerns of nonprofit practitioners who are actively engaged in sustaining communities in every way imaginable. Through understanding the real concerns of nonprofit practitioners—the board, executive leaders and staff of actual (or proposed) community organizations—we come to greater understanding about the institutional vehicle at the heart of such a great volume of community and civic engagement.

Stakeholders outside the academy are already involved in determining what nonprofit organizations need in order to build capacity to fulfill their missions, and this should also inform our understanding of what it is that we should be doing in nonprofit education programs. From the community perspective (outside the university proper), statewide associations of nonprofit organizations and federated umbrella organizations are also involved in determining requirements for appropriate operation of nonprofit organizations. Statewide associations may offer their members accreditation through the Standards for Excellence accreditation program for nonprofit organizations. Statewide associations may also offer members instruction and professional development on key aspects of nonprofit operation and leadership. Umbrella groups such as the United Way have established program performance measurement guidelines for the community programs that receive funding. All of these initiatives are shaping how nonprofit organizations behave in the execution of their missions and may even be shaping mission itself.

Nearly every interface we undertake in university-community relationships that further community and civic engagement will involve a community nonprofit organization. The current dialogue about the skills and competencies developed in nonprofit education programs is an important dimension of the university-community dialogue and should be a fundamental pillar of the university-community partnership around community and civic engagement. How these programs are designed and delivered has significant implications for the health of the university-community relationship and for the viability of faculty and student initiatives that focus on community and civic engagement. Community can—and must—serve as an equal partner with faculty in determining the knowledge and
skills that are important for universities to impart in this arena, which is the community itself.

The results of the nonprofit education competency conversation will ultimately influence engaged scholarship in general as nonprofit organizations provide the primary vehicle for interaction of faculty and students in many communities. Co-determination of curriculum with community has implications for nonprofit education programs and poses challenges for the competency discussions underway in national professional associations today. The primary challenge comes from the infinite variation in the concept of community itself; one size will never fit all communities, which are circumscribed in myriad ways and will express myriad needs. Different approaches to curriculum design will be necessary, and must specifically allow for variation to fit the dynamics of each community. These interviews and the recent scholarship about community co-determination in nonprofit curricula suggest that such an effort will be both welcome and highly fruitful for faculty, students, and communities who bring community and civic engagement to their scholarship.
We are once again in the new crucible of forces pushing on the university to nurture and produce critically engaged work, as Julie Ellison and Timothy Eatman observe in *Scholarship in Public*. Boyer’s call in *Scholarship Reconsidered* for greater interdisciplinary teaching and research more than twenty years ago provided a platform for the development of numerous cross-cutting initiatives that reached out into communities to approach problems from multiple perspectives. Over the last decade, universities and faculty within are facing new challenges in a deep economic recession, rising costs for students, rising numbers of non-tenure track faculty, and an unprecedented pace of technological change. This environment challenges universities and their faculty to understand what it means to produce new knowledge and what it means to educate citizens for meaningful participation in American democratic society and in a global environment.

In this volume, we presented a collection of academic scholarly and creative experiences that evoke the principles of publically engaged scholarship. These projects utilize well-articulated criteria within distinct disciplines and communities of expertise including academics and the communities that they engage. These projects are each connected to enhancing the public good and rely on reciprocity with the community to begin and to continue. The experiences discussed in this volume illustrate the multiple academic scholarly and creative works that can be developed from engaged scholarship, including journal articles, community presentations and other forms of dialogue with community, and pedagogical tools such as syllabi, course exercises, and lesson planning. These experiences also highlight the multi-directional nature of scholarship in action: it occurs when the university reaches into communities, when communities come to faculty to address problems, and when stakeholders within the university environment engage in broader conversations about how to design courses and programs that will result in engaged citizens after college or graduate school. Some of the projects in this volume are initiated within the structure of a course, others are initiated by grant funders and faculty through research initiatives; all
are part of the kaleidoscope of engaged scholarship bringing university and community together. Each project exposes a different definition and understanding of community, including participants inside and outside the university proper and with faculty and students participating in various roles. The projects also examine university-community connections across an array of perspectives that range from formal courses, projects within courses, administrative initiatives, institutes, and opinions of nonprofit organization leaders.

As a collected volume, these academic scholarly and creative works take on greater significance in their illustration of the collaborative journey of Auburn University administration and faculty making connections with community through community and civic engagement. The teaching, research, and outreach scholarship demonstrated here tells a story about the university-community journey and makes the case that this journey is critically important for all involved, in spite of its many challenges. This critical importance lies in the processes that we use, in our engagement with public life as researchers and teachers, and in the leveraging of administrative support for these efforts.

The Auburn journey is distinct in its ambition to focus on reciprocal learning for all participants, and its integrated process of faculty-student-community partnership that involves multiple iterations and reconfigurations of an idea. Engaged scholarship always involves process as well as product. It always involves learning and adopting new attitudes and practices with the community. It always involves a new geography or space where multiple forms of learning occur. It always involves the unexpected, failures, and setbacks. The knowledge that is produced and the skills that are acquired reach both into and beyond texts, and allow all participants to give voice to their passions, to conduct research, and develop evidence about the world around them.

More broadly, such civic engagement matters to all of us as participants in the American democratic enterprise and as global citizens, whether we are faculty, students, administrators, or communities, and whether we call our work teaching, research, or outreach. To navigate the space between university goals and public needs, we need to develop for ourselves and our students a sense of how our work is grounded in the world itself. This process of learning to work together—in the world—to identify and address community problems in pursuit of what William Sullivan (1995) named “civic professionalism,” makes its most important contribution as it enhances democratic capacity. We cannot do that without leaving the classroom.

As these scholarly and creative experiences also demonstrate, engaged scholarship involves dealing with resistance and uncertainty in the community. This resistance includes potential resistance to faculty as experts and students as entitled or transient interlopers. This uncertainty includes an inherent mistrust of outsiders. There is also uncertainty inherent in the nature of the problems and conditions we seek to examine; success is hard to see and even more difficult to measure. Communities themselves must be engaged as equal partners in order to tackle these challenges. Every project in this volume discusses the importance of co-determination and co-production with community both as a method of problem-solving and as the path to sustainable relationships and future
involvement. It bears repeating that communities do not always have a seat at the table, let alone an equal seat. As scholars and creators, we are uniquely concerned with the intractable and the unknown in the production of knowledge; we need to remember to anticipate resistance and embrace uncertainty, and engage our students in it through our research and our teaching because it is a universal truth of the public sphere.

Engaged scholarship encounters resistance and uncertainty in the academy as well. As each of these projects demonstrates, administrative support is essential. Moreover, it takes time to develop an administrative architecture that is integrated with faculty efforts. In this case, architecture of programs and events evolved over seven years within the College of Liberal Arts that supported all of the activities here to some degree. Important aspects of that support include the annual academy for engaged scholars, grant support and guest residencies for project development, scholarship and travel support for students, visibility for engaged work through multiple channels and venues, and stipends and awards for singular achievements. Along the way, the university itself also earned classification as an engaged institution. Over the past seven years, opportunities for collegial interaction were created by administrators – and by faculty – that fostered greater understanding and developed mutuality among those interested in pursuing community and civic engagement work. Now, within the university and outside it, we exist as a resource pool for others and for ourselves. The administrative architecture created here also provides the stability that is necessary in order to navigate across the time that it takes to establish relationships and begin productive work. As the experiences that we have catalogued in this volume illustrate, the time required to support successful community and civic engagement initiatives is considerable and at seven years we are only just beginning. Administrative architecture also provides a measure of legitimacy for our peers and colleagues who may not always understand community and civic engagement as a form of scholarship.

On the point of resistance within the academy, the experiences in this volume suggest that we have work to do in bridging gaps between old and new ways of understanding. We should be able to articulate our work in ways that speak to our disciplines and that can be recognized by our colleagues inside and outside our home institutions as rigorous and relevant. We can encourage each other to bring forward our engaged discoveries, artifacts of pedagogy, and conclusions in ways that expose the value of our enterprises rather than in ways that may relegate it to classification as “other” or “less than.” We also have to continue to challenge one another to produce engaged scholarship that is integrated into broader public understanding of our fields. We have to engage this conversation within the university walls and also beyond, to include other stakeholders who are invested in our success, such as the grantmakers who support our research and our peers in professional associations that seek to build the curricular architecture for the future of publically engaged scholarship. In these dialogues, we can establish broad and integrated concepts of scholarship that allow room for difference, and that recognize a broad variety of scholarly and creative efforts including engaged methods of instruction and curricula. As we evaluate programs and each other’s scholarly and creative work, we need to remind ourselves one-size does not fit all.
These efforts can only enhance the public relevance of the knowledge and practices that all disciplines hold dear.

Ellison and Eatman (2008) and others have established a baseline, but it is up to us to carry this forward. It is our obligation to make the case for our work, and for this kind of work, in tenure and promotion decisions. And it is our obligation to teach others how to do this as well, by tilting the prism of our work at multiple angles so that the richness of our experience comes through in combinations of teaching, research, and outreach that are inextricably bound together. If we have laid a truly collaborative foundation with community and if we have disseminated our scholarship in multiple forms around our projects, we will have an easier path in demonstrating the value and influence of our engagement and of the engagement between university and community.

Creating knowledge is what we do as scholars-citizens; creating knowledge in and with community for public benefit is what we should do as scholars-teachers to create the learning opportunities that will matter to all of us. As the Auburn University journey illustrates through this collected volume, engaged scholarship requires commitment from all involved in order to build real partnerships that bridge different worlds. It thrives with institutional support and personal mentorship. Our ability to continue to meet the considerable challenges of engaged scholarship requires that we constantly make the case for its value, and that we maintain its visibility within the university community and the broader communities that are our partners in public life.
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