

Guest Editor

Civic Engagement at Traditional Research Universities

Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr.

This issue is dedicated to the challenges and opportunities of developing civic engagement initiatives at traditional Research 1 (R1) universities.¹ While such initiatives have been common for some time at other types of institutions, they are relatively new for major research universities. Nevertheless, there is a growing national movement to conceive of civic engagement activities as an essential part of the R1 mission. For example, in the fall of 2005 a group of senior administrators and faculty from research-oriented institutions met at Tufts University to begin a more focused and collective dialogue about civic engagement. The result of that meeting was a case statement that lays out the argument for civic engagement as an integral part of an R1's mission.² Similarly, in June of 2005, President Robert Dynes of the University of California convened a meeting with key faculty and administrators from all ten campuses to share experiences and best practices related to civic engagement.³ Finally, Campus Compact and the leadership of the Haas Center for Public Service at Stanford convened a symposium in the spring of 2006 focused on civic engagement and graduate education at research universities.⁴ In all, civic engagement at Research 1 universities has begun to play a central role in discussions about the future of higher education.

Our primary goal was to give voice to as many perspectives as possible. Thus, the institutions featured in this issue represent a broad spectrum of urban-located R1 institutions at different stages in the development of civic engagement on their respective campuses. Moreover, there is a regional mix: contributions from smaller and larger schools, urban and less urban institutions, and publics and privates. The authors include university presidents, senior administrators, and a wide array of faculty and staff. The end result is that there are relevant lessons for a wide variety of research

¹ We use the term R1 not as a formal designation, but as a commonly understood descriptor of highly research-oriented universities. There is considerable debate about what constitutes a research university, and the nomenclature has changed recently. For more information on the Carnegie classification system, visit the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching Web site at: <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org>.

² The case statement is in draft form as of this writing; contact guest editor for more information.

³ Symposium proceedings are available on-line from the Center for Studies in Higher Education at UC Berkeley: <http://cshe.berkeley.edu/publications/publications.php?id=128>

⁴ More information in symposium papers can be found at the California Campus Compact Web site: http://www.cacampuscompact.org/cacc_programs/pip_research1/index.html

institutions. Nonetheless, there are several common themes that run through all of the articles. Four are particularly noteworthy:

1. Success is significantly more likely if the president or chancellor is on board and supportive.
2. There must be a strategically placed central locus of activity headed by a visible senior administrator.
3. There must be a substantive connection to research scholarship.
4. Both internal and external change will take time. Patience, in this case, is indeed a virtue.

The issue is kicked off with a piece by Nancy Zimpher, President of the University of Cincinnati. President Zimpher provides the “10,000 foot” view by focusing on the importance of incorporating civic engagement into campus-wide strategic planning processes. She details her experience leading institutional planning processes at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (“The Milwaukee Plan”) and at the University of Cincinnati (UC/21), ending the article with a very insightful checklist of lessons learned.

In the second piece, Hartley, Harkavy, and Benson recount the University of Pennsylvania’s twenty-year experience with institutionalizing the engaged university. The authors offer a powerfully succinct articulation of the major impediments to institutionalizing civic engagement. They note that successful institutional change hinges on both ideological and structural reforms. They utilize Penn’s experience in West Philadelphia as a case study to highlight the strategies, operations, and challenges of systemic change.

Hollister, Mead, and Wilson follow with an analysis of another mature civic engagement initiative—the creation and evolution of University College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University. The Tufts model, in a somewhat different vein, centers on the significance of active citizenship to the democratic ideal. In this regard the University College seeks to prepare students for a lifelong commitment to civic engagement. The article outlines how students, faculty, alumni, and the broader community come together to pursue the civic mission of higher education.

The piece by Vogelgesang, Gilliam, O’Byrne, and Leal-Sotelo details the initial years of a major civic engagement initiative at the University of California, Los Angeles. UCLA is, of course, a large public university located in one of the country’s largest cities. Starting in 2002 with the creation of the Center for Community Partnerships, the article describes the evolution of the “UCLA in LA” framework, the advancement of the concept of engaged scholarship, thinking behind the development of early programming, and the challenges of engaging a massive and complicated metropolitan region.

Like UCLA, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is a large public university. Unlike UCLA, it is located in a much smaller city. Steven Shomberg drills down to one of the core issues in the civic engagement movement—namely, promotion and tenure. In his article he describes a nearly twenty-year process of incorporating procedures and policies to accurately gauge excellence in civic engagement for evaluations of faculty dossiers. Shomberg argues that civic engagement can be incorporated into the promotion and tenure process but cautions that change is likely to be incremental.

Next in the issue is a piece by Michael Crow, President of Arizona State University and his collaborator Kimberly Loui. The article lays out the conceptual model for what they call the “new American university.” The central premise is that significant social, technological, and demographic changes require that American universities must engage with and be engaged by their communities to improve civic life. Crow and Loui spell out the building blocks of civic engagement as they relate to their University’s preliminary steps to operationalize their framework.

In sum, this issue presents the challenges and opportunities facing leaders at R1 universities as they embark on major civic engagement initiatives. The perspectives range from campuses with a great deal of experience to others just beginning their journey. The articles indicate the challenges and opportunities for both large and small schools, publics and privates, as well as those located in cities of varying sizes. We hope you enjoy reading them and that you are able to glean helpful lessons for your own civic engagement activities.

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