

The prevailing challenges of advancing and institutionalizing service-learning at research universities are discussed. Three strategies for overcoming these challenges are offered as potential ways to raise the legitimacy of service-learning at research universities.

Advancing Service-Learning at Research Universities

Andrew Furco

In recent years, the pedagogy of service-learning — the integration of community service into the academic curriculum — has been increasingly incorporated into the academic fabric of many colleges and universities around the country. Service-learning is rooted in the theories of constructivism and experiential education. According to a number of service-learning experts, service-learning is a teaching strategy that enhances students' learning of the academic content by engaging them in authentic activities in which they apply the content of the course to address identified needs in the local and broader community (Bringle & Hatcher, 1995; Howard, 1998). Barbara Jacoby (1996) writes, "As a pedagogy, service-learning is education that is grounded in experience as a basis for learning and on the centrality and intentionality of reflection designed to enable learning to occur" (p. 9).

Given that service-learning is cast primarily (although not exclusively) as a pedagogy, it is not surprising that the growth of service-learning in higher education has been most prominent at the colleges and universities that emphasize teaching, such as liberal arts colleges, comprehensive colleges, and other teaching-focused doctorate-granting institutions. At research institutions, however, service-learning activity and

institutional support for faculty involvement in service-learning have not been as strong (Rothman, 1998). This is not surprising given that these institutions emphasize research over teaching, and therefore are likely less inclined to have a concerted, campus-wide effort to promote the advancement of a particular pedagogy.

This issue brings into question the role of service-learning at research universities. Although teaching is certainly an essential component of research institutions, it is the production and publication of high quality research that takes center stage as the predominant benchmark by which faculty performance is measured (Boyer, 1987). Therefore, is it possible or even wise to advance and institutionalize service-learning at research universities? What incentives do faculty members at research universities have to use service-learning? This paper explores how service-learning is as appropriate for faculty at research universities as it is for faculty at other types of higher education institutions.

The Purposes of Research Institutions

The American research university grew out of German academic traditions and structures that sought to ensure a focus on pure research that was “wholly unconstrained by narrow utilitarian considerations” (Lucas, 1994, p.171). In his treatise of the history of American Higher Education, Christopher Lucas writes, “Especially impressive to American observers was the Germanic emphasis upon the disinterested pursuit of truth through original scholarly investigation” (1994, p. 172). Throughout the second half of the eighteenth century, many colleges that had disseminated knowledge primarily through teaching were now being transformed to emphasize scholarly research and

disseminate knowledge through investigation and publication. In this regard, higher education institutions shifted from being knowledge transmitters to knowledge generators.

The growth of knowledge, the rise of disciplinary specialization, the establishment of empiricism as the hallmark of inquiry in all disciplines, and the influx of federal funds during the first half of the twentieth century all gave the research university prominence and esteem. And despite both the growing role of the states in funding and shaping higher education and the rise of the competitive corporate academe environment in the second half of the century, the status and prominence of research in higher education has not faltered (Lucas, 1994). Today, even those institutions that do not classify themselves as a “research college” or “research university” consider research productivity, and all of the expectations that go along with it – garnering of research grants, scholarly publications, production of new knowledge – to be an essential gauge of the quality and status of their institutions. The college and graduate school rankings of *U.S. News and World Report* provide a perfect, current example of how high in esteem we hold those institutions that make research the primary focus of their work.

Because of the centrality of research, teaching activities at research institutions, albeit necessary, are not what get faculty promoted or advance institutions in their national rankings. And for faculty members at research universities who genuinely enjoy teaching, deciding how much time to devote to teaching and how much time to devote to research can be a source of ongoing tension. The primary rewards for these faculty members are rooted in the level and quality of their research activity, the garnering of

research funds, and the production of influential publications. It is highly unlikely that faculty members at research universities who are not successful in one or more of these research-centered activities will be granted tenure, even if they maintain a heavy course load and are excellent teachers (Boyer, 1987).

The existing research-centered expectations and norms can be a disincentive for faculty at research institutions to explore and pursue activities that are perceived to be non-scholarly and non-research focused. Such activities might include the exploration of new and innovative teaching practices, the development of community partnerships, the use of new student assessment techniques, and the production of publications that are intended for non-academic audiences. The prevailing institutional norms and expectations are disincentives especially for junior faculty, whose early career choices and level of productivity will have long-term effects on their career trajectories. Without inducements and incentives for faculty members at research universities to explore pedagogies such as service-learning, the advancement of service-learning at research universities is likely to remain a slow and difficult process.

The Role of Faculty in Advancing Service-Learning

A University of California-Berkeley study of the process of institutionalizing service-learning at colleges and universities (n=45) in the western United States found that the strongest predictor for institutionalizing service-learning on college campuses is faculty involvement in and support for service-learning (Bell et al., 2000). The study, which included two-year community colleges, four-year private institutions, and four-year public institutions, found that even when institutional rewards and incentives are in

place for faculty to participate in service-learning, faculty members agree to expend the time and energy to develop high quality service-learning experiences for their students only when they are convinced that engaging in service-learning will not be viewed negatively by their peers or the campus administration. This finding was true across all types of institutions.

The Berkeley institutionalization study found that without the genuine support and involvement of a critical mass of faculty for service-learning, service-learning is likely not to become institutionalized on a campus to any significant degree (Bell et al, 2000). Therefore, one of the first steps to advancing service-learning on any campus is to develop a critical mass of faculty who support and promote the use of service-learning. At institutions where faculty members are rewarded actively for employing effective, innovative teaching strategies that improve student learning, service-learning can be a welcomed approach among faculty. At such institutions (e.g., Portland State University, California State University-Monterey Bay), faculty members know that their efforts to implement effective pedagogies, such as service-learning, will be perceived by their colleagues and administrators to be a valuable part of their teaching scholarship. On these campuses, the institutional culture provides the seed bed out of which a critical mass of faculty supporters for service-learning can sprout and grow.

However, at institutions where the scholarship of teaching is not the predominant barometer for professional advancement and where the prevailing institutional culture does not look favorably upon applied learning, faculty members are likely to be more reticent in supporting service-learning as a legitimate academic, scholarly pursuit.

Focused on conducting high quality research within their disciplinary specialty area, faculty members at research institutions must be convinced that service-learning can enhance and advance their roles as researchers and scholars.

How then does one surmount a research university's prevailing institutional norms and expectations to forge a critical mass of faculty members who genuinely support the advancement of service-learning? Three potential strategies for advancing service-learning at research universities are offered. First, service-learning must be tied to the scholarly activities that research faculty value most. Second, service-learning must be tied to the important academic goals and initiatives underway on the campus. And third, service-learning must be incorporated strategically into the disciplinary structure of the university. In each case, the goal is to make service-learning a more essential component of the academic structures and practices that are valued most at research universities. This goal can only be accomplished through a concerted effort that is led by both the faculty and the campus administration.

Service-Learning and Faculty Research

The best means of garnering support for service-learning from faculty at research universities is to connect service-learning to faculty's research work (Bell et al., 2000). For this connection to happen, campus administrators need to promote service-learning as a *philosophy* rather than as a pedagogy. In many ways, service-learning is not only about teaching; it also involves the theoretical and practical exploration and investigation of social issues through a particular disciplinary lens. Pedagogically, students address the needs of the community through their application of a course's academic content.

However, faculty can use the service-learning experiences of their students to engage their own expertise in the research of important community issues.

According to Reardon (1998), an increasing number of colleges and universities are seeing the scholarly benefits of having faculty incorporate service-learning into their research activities. Many of the civic and social issues that are addressed through service-learning incorporate numerous theories, philosophies, and concepts that are rooted in a variety of disciplines including economics, sociology, public health, law, business, education, and psychology. Sandra Enos and Marie Troppe (1996) suggest that research is an integral part of all service-learning since the solutions to community problems addressed in the service-learning experience should be based on the application of findings derived from research. By aligning one's research interests and disciplinary specialization with a pertinent aspect of the social issue that is being addressed by students in the service-learning course, a faculty member can use service-learning to advance his or her research agenda.

For example, a faculty member in atmospheric sciences whose research work is focused on issues of global warming might engage students in a service-learning project in which they survey various populations about their understanding of global warming and its causes. The survey might include questions about the everyday practices that the subjects employ that potentially contribute to the advancement or reduction of global warming. The data gathered from the student surveys can be used by the students to develop informational materials that inform the public about the causes and hazards of global warming. Furthermore, the faculty member can use the data to inform his or her

investigations. In this case, the faculty member might use the data to develop a demographic profile of people's awareness of global warming. This profile might be used in identifying a representative sample for a future study.

Some faculty members who are involved in long-term research projects have used service-learning as a means to develop long-term relationships with agencies that can assist them in identifying potential research subjects. By engaging a group of students in various service-learning activities in the same set of agencies over several semesters, faculty members can make these agencies essential partners for identifying research subjects and sites for their own investigations. And for the kinds of research grants that are offered by many federal agencies, such long-term partnerships can be assets in the funding competition.

One of the concerns about using service-learning for the purposes of research is that it challenges the traditional *professional-expert* research model (Reardon, 1998). Because successful service-learning experiences are predicated on effective campus-community partnerships, members of the community play an important role in designing and shaping the scope of the research investigation. Often referred to as *participatory action research*, this form of research is not always highly regarded among pure academicians and basic researchers. However, Reardon (1998), Jacoby (1996), and others argue that participatory action research is a more effective and meaningful form of research than basic research since its direct relevance to the needs of the community "increases the potential for implementation of recommendations emerging from these research efforts" (Reardon, 1998, p. 59). The results of participatory action research

investigations not only make contributions to a body of disciplinary knowledge, but they also culminate in a set of recommendations that are then implemented through action. (Jacoby, 1996).

A second justification for connecting service-learning activities to faculty research is that faculty members can garner publications, research grants, and public recognition by engaging in community-based research that is facilitated through students' service-learning activities. Using service-learning as a vehicle to investigate social issues that are tied to a faculty member's area of expertise can prove to be a viable and productive means for faculty at research universities (and other types of higher education institutions) to promote and advance their research agendas. Focusing one's research on issues of immediate social importance can help raise the visibility and broaden the appeal of a faculty member's research work. The service-learning work of students can help faculty generate ideas, topics, and designs for research.

Naturally, not all courses and not all areas of study will lend themselves easily to service-learning. And not all service-learning experiences will generate research activity for faculty. However, in many instances across the spectrum of academic disciplines, service-learning can be a vehicle for advancing some aspect of a faculty member's research work. As faculty members begin to use service-learning to advance their research agendas, their buy-in for service-learning can be more firmly secured.

However, long-term faculty support for service-learning comes only if the campus administration gives legitimacy to community-based research. The Berkeley institutionalization study found that after faculty support for service-learning,

institutional support for service-learning was the second strongest predictor for institutionalizing service-learning in higher education (Bell et al., 2000). Specifically, the findings reveal that in order to advance the service-learning institutionalization process, campus administrators must set up institutional structures and mechanisms that support faculty engagement in service-learning. Unless the institution genuinely recognizes service-learning as a legitimate academic pursuit that enhances faculty scholarship, faculty members, especially junior faculty, will shy away from participating in service-learning over any significant portion of time (Holland, 1999; Ward, 1998).

At research institutions, the support structures and mechanisms to be put in place might include the establishment of an interdisciplinary research center that brings together faculty members who are interested in community-based research. Other structures might include research grant support to faculty members who want to tie their disciplinary research to investigations related to issues in the local community or the formal consideration of service-learning in the campus's promotion, review, and tenure policies. These kinds of structures and mechanisms not only send the message to faculty members that the institution is supportive of their work in service-learning, but it also provides a forum for faculty members who use service-learning in various disciplines to come together, share their experiences, and air their concerns. Such campus-wide, cross-disciplinary faculty initiatives and incentives are essential for the development of a critical mass of faculty that support service-learning on a campus (Bell et al., 2000).

Service-Learning and The University Mission

As was mentioned previously, the advancement of service-learning at research universities does not reside solely with the faculty. The institution itself must have structures and mechanisms in place that support the service-learning work of faculty. So then, what incentives does the campus administration of a research university have to establish these support structures and mechanisms?

One rationale for establishing structures and mechanisms that support faculty members' work in service-learning is that service-learning can be a vehicle to achieve many of the overarching goals of research institutions. On the surface, the goals of service-learning (e.g., the application of knowledge to address community needs) seem antithetical to the primary knowledge-generating purposes of research universities. However, over the years, the purely non-utilitarian emphasis of research universities has not existed without debate.

Ironically, the growing emphasis on research in higher education came in the early 1900's, at the start of the progressive era, which emphasized social and civic service. As higher education institutions were being called upon to assist in addressing the social problems of the day, research universities worked to develop formal ties with their local communities. The formation of the land grant institutions was one of the earliest manifestations of this effort. The University of Wisconsin's proclamation that it would focus on tying its research with community needs encouraged universities around the country to adopt similar stances. It was not long before research institutions such as

University of Michigan, Harvard University, and University of Chicago were engaging students in their communities to address a variety of social issues (Lucas, 1994).

While the social and civic purposes of higher education were revisited at several points throughout the twentieth century, these purposes never supplanted the focus on pure research investigation, scholarly publication, and research grant acquisition. Much of the rhetoric surrounding the civic and social purposes of higher education has been rooted in the debate over utilitarian (social, professional) purposes versus liberal (academic) purposes of education. And while attempts have been made over the years to strike a balance between the utilitarian and liberal purposes, the research universities have tended to place emphasis on the more liberal aspects of education (Boyer, 1987).

The pendulum has not ceased to swing. The rise of service-learning in the 1990's is to some degree a reaction to the growing concern that higher education has grown "utterly remote and removed from the vital concerns with which academic inquiry had once been engaged" (Lucas, 1994, p. 287). According to Lucas, the strongest criticism has been against the research universities – ivory towers where the specializations and subspecializations of faculty create environments where serious scholarship is confined to "small problems, narrowly drawn topics and issues, and in-depth analysis of subjects of microscopic proportions and sharply delimited boundaries," which results in research that "does not contribute much of significance to the general populace or any particular segment thereof...." (Lucas, p. 286).

Such criticisms of higher education have recently spawned a series of reform initiatives that have sought to reshape some of the purposes of higher education. These

reforms have included efforts to improve the curriculum and teaching of undergraduate education by providing increased focus on the scholarship of teaching, to shed the ivory tower image through the development of campus/community partnerships in which faculty can explore a scholarship of engagement, and to address the potentially limiting focus of disciplinary specialization through the fostering of intellectual cross-disciplinary learning communities. These reforms have begun to gain legitimacy at a number of colleges and universities, including research universities, around the country. Interestingly, many of these reform initiatives are closely aligned with the philosophy, goals, and pedagogy of service-learning.

Throughout the 1990's, higher education has taken a critical look at its teaching practices, especially in the area of undergraduate education. The efforts to improve undergraduate education have been strongest at the teaching colleges. For the research universities, which place greater emphasis on graduate education, the focus on improving faculty's teaching effectiveness have remained less strong. However, although research productivity remains the predominant factor in the advancement of faculty at research institutions, the late 1990's saw a shift at research universities towards placing greater emphasis on a faculty member's teaching effectiveness.

If the engagement of students in service is an effective pedagogy for improving student learning, as a number of service-learning experts have claimed (Eyler and Giles, 1999), then administrators of research universities might want to consider supporting faculty members' incorporation of service-learning in their courses. The development and implementation of a service-learning course can assist faculty members in

demonstrating their scholarship of teaching. By engaging students in a rigorous, powerful, and meaningful service-learning experience, teachers can increase students' understanding of the course concepts (Eyler & Giles, 1999), thus providing themselves with greater teaching success, especially with undergraduate students.

Along with meeting institutional goals of improving teaching practices, service-learning can also help promote recent efforts in higher education to forge stronger connections between the campus and the local community. Because service-learning is predicated on the involvement of faculty, campus/community collaborations inherently become part of the academic fabric of the institution. The infusion of these partnerships into the academic core of the institution can help better stabilize and institutionalize what are often viewed as tenuous and short-lived campus/community collaborations.

For research universities, such campus/community collaborations should focus on directly engaging the scholarly expertise of faculty members in addressing the pressing needs of the local and greater community. Through service-learning, faculty can lend their expertise to the community through their research, their teaching, and/or their service. This type of comprehensive, faculty community engagement, most recently referred to as the *scholarship of engagement*, focuses on utilizing individual faculty members' expertise to contribute to the public welfare and common good (Boyer, 1996; Driscoll & Lynton, 1999; Schomberg & Farmer, 1994). According to Lynton (1995), service-learning is an effective way to foster faculty members' scholarship of engagement. By seeing community engagement as an important part of faculty members' professional

service, research institutions can pave the way for more faculty to see a value in applying their academic expertise to address authentic issues in the community.

And there has been some significant movement in this area. Last year, a national review board for the scholarship of engagement was established by Campus Compact and the American Association for Higher Education. This review board is an independent body comprised of faculty members from throughout the country who conduct peer-reviews of individual faculty members' portfolios to assess their scholarship of engagement. The establishment of this review board speaks volumes to the growing legitimacy that the scholarship of engagement is garnering across all types of institutions of higher education.

The social issues that are being addressed in service-learning are often complex and require the implementation of strategies that draw upon multiple and varied disciplines and perspectives. For example, addressing the issue of the presence of asbestos in the local neighborhood schools could easily require a collaboration of a variety of experts from public health, social welfare, economics, law, education, biology, environmental science, and chemistry. If part of the project involves informing parents and the city about the problem, the project could conceivably draw some expertise from the foreign language department (to translate information to non-English speaking parents), public policy, and psychology.

At many higher education institutions around the country, including research universities, the formation of faculty centers, teaching and learning centers, and other campus-wide, interdisciplinary forums or "spaces" for faculty to collaborate on joint

ventures is on the rise. Service-learning can be an effective means for getting faculty members to work together across programs and departments (Zlotkowski, 1999).

Zlotkowski (1999) writes, "By anchoring itself in real-world projects, [service-learning] naturally serves to pull participating faculty members in the direction of functional and conceptual integration" (p. 111).

Therefore, campus administrators can use service-learning to help develop cross-disciplinary learning communities. Along with alleviating some of the professional isolation that faculty members often endure at research universities (Boyer, 1987), these learning communities can help change some of the disciplinary-centered norms of the institution and move the research institution towards legitimizing faculty work in applied, socially-relevant research, teaching, and service.

Service-learning should not be viewed as a new, additional program. Instead, a campus administration should view and use service-learning as a vehicle to meet the goals of existing, important educational reform initiatives taking place on the campus. This is an essential component for advancing service-learning at research universities.

Service-Learning and the Disciplines

A third strategy for advance service-learning at research universities is by making service-learning a central part of the academic work of the disciplines. The predominant association that faculty members have is with their discipline. When service-learning is genuinely valued within a discipline, faculty members within the discipline begin to view service-learning as a legitimate scholarly pursuit (Holland, 1999).

The production of the American Association for Higher Education's monograph series on service-learning in the disciplines and the growing presence of service-learning workshops at professional disciplinary association conferences have raised awareness of service-learning across a variety of disciplines. Tying service-learning to what faculty members at research institutions already value – peer-reviewed scholarly publication and professional disciplinary conferences – helps raise its academic legitimacy. As service-learning is presented more prominently in various departments and disciplines, faculty members will begin to perceive service-learning as something that their peers value and consequently something of which they should be cognizant.

Unlike many programs or initiatives, which tend to target a particular discipline or set of disciplines, service-learning is universal in that it has potential application to every discipline. And while service-learning is not appropriate for every *course*, service-learning can be and has been connected to the work of faculty in every discipline. The AAHE monograph series and the wide array of service-learning courses being offered at higher education institution across the country testify to the universality of service-learning.

Thus, service-learning faculty and campus administrators at research universities should find ways to disseminate the key, disciplined-based service-learning literature resources to appropriate faculty throughout the campus. Discipline-based conferences and events on service-learning (e.g., Campus-Community Partnership for Health conferences, Service-Learning in Teacher Education meetings, etc.) should be announced on campuses. Campus administrators and department chairs need to make opportunities

available for faculty to attend these meetings and learn about service-learning through the various existing discipline-based associations and networks. It is important that at these gatherings, the faculty are able to meet and converse with faculty members in their discipline from other research universities who are engaged in service-learning. The more service-learning can be tied to the disciplinary work of faculty, the more they are likely to consider it to be an important and legitimate part of their work.

Conclusion

Advancing and institutionalizing service-learning at research universities is predicated on the degree to which service-learning is tied to work of research faculty and the overall mission and purposes of research universities. Specifically, at research universities, service-learning must be viewed by faculty members as a valued part of their scholarly work, an essential part of the academic mission of the institution, and a valued component in their discipline. The campus administration must not view service-learning as a separate, independent program, but rather it should use service-learning as a means to achieve the goals of broader, academic reform initiatives taking place on campus. If service-learning is to be fully advanced and institutionalized at research universities, faculty must be made aware of how service-learning is tied directly not only to their teaching and service activities, but also to their research. And while most of the issues addressed in this paper hold true for all types of higher education institutions, they are especially important for research universities, where service-learning has seen a relatively slow growth. Only when a deliberate and strong scholarly value is placed on

service-learning can service-learning be aligned with the various academic goals, purposes, and structures of research universities.

ANDREW FURCO is Director of the Service-Learning Research & Development Center at the University of California at Berkeley and a member of the faculty in Berkeley's Graduate School of Education.

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