From the Editor's Desk

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Around the nation, many of our large urbanized areas are engaging in regional discussions about their future vision. Only a few large cities have a formal regional government. Most metropolitan regions are made up of a large central city and/or county with many separate fringe communities and suburbs, each with their own governments and their own histories. My own region of Cincinnati has almost 200 separate governmental units of towns and counties in the metropolitan area. Often these separate entities find themselves wrestling with changes, problems, and opportunities that are not easily dealt with in isolation. Increasingly, we understand that successful regional economies, good housing and schools, and safe, healthy communities depend on regional strategies and intergovernmental cooperation.

Cooperation can be a challenging task. Urban and metropolitan universities have a key role to play in facilitating the discussion of a region's vision. At a minimum, our institutions can serve as neutral ground for convening different interest groups exploring areas of common concerns. More than this, our faculty, staff, and students are reservoirs of intellectual energy, information, and curiosity whose work can help answer critical questions about a region's condition and future possibilities. Regional conversations can be prickly and difficult as separate communities strive to work together, and a good first step to accelerating cooperation can be working with a university to uncover facts and a measure of reality that can replace myths and perceptions.

This issue of *Metropolitan Universities* looks at public policy institutes at urban and metropolitan universities. The articles reveal interesting patterns of the many competing forces that these institutes must manage when working with their metropolitan regions. Our guest editors, Ethan Seltzer and Rob Melnick, have recruited authors who discuss many of the challenges, pitfalls and rewards of such efforts. Placing the university in the middle of challenging and often controversial regional discussions puts special pressure on the institute to ensure objectivity, accuracy, and thoroughness in its research and facilitation roles. Policy centers find themselves wrestling with topics such as understanding the role and interests of the university in regional decision-making (can we or should we always be neutral?), the borderline between faculty as researchers and as advocates, the balance among the many divergent perspectives of the community, and other key questions.

Some of the challenges of institute work are internal to the university. When faculty are involved in research or facilitation of economic and community development planning projects, what is the role of academic freedom? When do faculty members speak for the university's interests and when are they acting as scholars, and is the difference clear to the community?

Many of the articles also raise the issue of faculty rewards. Partnerships between university and communities to facilitate regional thinking and planning are natural components of the metropolitan university mission, but are faculty appropriately rewarded for the time given to community service and community-based research? Fac-

ulty work in public policy institutes is often labeled professional service, community-based research, outreach, or other terms that are sometimes seen by the academy as less rigorous alternatives to traditional research. Some of our authors discuss the special challenge of involving faculty in institute work when it is unclear what value the work will have in the context of the formal reward system.

My own work has included research on faculty views of service, especially on what motivates them to engage in service activities, what rewards they expect, and how service relates to their teaching and research. Interestingly, while many faculty express frustration that service is not always considered in formal promotion and tenure reviews, only a few identified the omission as the major obstacle to involvement in service activities. Of equal or greater concern were the intensive amount of time it takes to engage in community-based projects, the extra effort involved in working with multiple external partners, the lack of adequate incentives, or concern about sufficient institutional commitment to the partnership. Many faculty were found to be engaged in community-based research and service because they believe it "is the right thing to do," and they feel a responsibility to apply their knowledge toward the improvement of society and community. For these faculty, service has significant intrinsic rewards.

Whatever the individual beliefs and motivations of faculty "to engage or not engage" in community service such as the work of public policy institutes, we know we must create appropriate incentive and reward systems. Given the diverse motivations of faculty, the best practice seems to be to offer a diverse array of rewards. Readers interested in learning more about changing views of faculty rewards, and especially about approaches to the evaluation and rewarding of professional service, may wish to return to Vol. 7, No. 4, and Vol. 8, No. 1 of *Metropolitan Universities*, published in 1997. These two issues on faculty rewards offer both practical examples and new strategies for assessing the quality of community-based scholarship and for revising traditional reward systems.