Civic Engagement and the "Research College"

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Abstract

Liberal arts colleges infrequently appear as prominent models of civic engagement. Yet their low profile and limited role in the higher education engagement discourse masks great potential. This article challenges these institutions to connect liberal education and civic engagement and argues that this is practicable within current priorities and market forces. Achieving these ends requires understanding increased emphases on research as an institutional priority and learning tool and aligning those emphases with engaged teaching and research.

America's top liberal arts colleges are rarely urban and uncommonly "metropolitan" in their perspective. None are members of the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities, though many are members of state and national Campus Compacts. Yet the significant human and financial resources in these colleges and their reputation as models for undergraduate education innovation makes their potential contributions to the civic engagement goals articulated in the Declaration of Metropolitan Universities (Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities - CUMU 2006) of great interest. This article seeks to:

a) challenge the nation's well-resourced, "elite" liberal arts colleges to respond to the very same call that *Metropolitan Universities* journal and the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities are making to metropolitan institutions of higher education for more productive, intentional and reciprocal partnership with regions and communities;

b) challenge the assumption that predominantly small, private, liberal arts institutions cannot provide the kinds of comprehensive, adaptive, and applied responses mobilized or at least available at their larger, public, and more "research-intensive" counterparts; and

c) propose a vision for how liberal arts colleges can align the exigencies of civic engagement with the resources that already constitute strengths and with important trends affecting their institutions.

Across the country, institutions of higher education have been searching for meaningful and creative ways to embrace students and faculty from wider socio-economic and ethnic/racial backgrounds and to teach, foster, and embody civic

responsibility while bringing intellectual and human resources to bear upon challenges of community development. Urban and public universities, urged on by dire local conditions and civic leaders, have become the institutions most notably at the vanguard of this response to the complex and interrelated issues of civic responsibility, civic renewal, education, and development. Several institutions stand out as having mobilized systemic responses that match pedagogical initiatives to develop civic and social responsibility with pressing neighborhood and metropolitan needs. Such institutions are partnering to learn and serve in more and better ways than ever before, getting involved in K-12 education, economic development, and social services. But many others have yet to respond.

Despite profiles of prestigious, well-resourced institutions as places that provide high-quality educations and gateways to personal and professional achievement, the country's "elite" liberal arts colleges do not appear as key contributors to the widening discourse about civic responsibility in higher education. As institutions neither have they modeled programmatic innovation in college-community partnership for social and economic development, nor have they developed on any scale, or to any notoriety, curricular responses to civic responsibility tied to institutional community engagement. Rare are the examples of liberal arts colleges that have developed substantial or fundamentally transformative approaches to either challenge. There are of course exceptions. Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut and Bates in Lewiston, Maine are two colleges that have developed institutional initiatives significant for their campus scale and, hopefully, also to their communities. Berea College in Kentucky and Hampshire College in Massachusetts have made community service a core curricular requirement. Smaller scale initiatives at other institutions exist, but remain limited within their institutional contexts. Amherst College's recent receipt of a $13 million gift to establish a Center for Community Engagement holds great promise to deeply transform that institution. Nonetheless, this sector on the whole has yet to achieve national standing as a group of institutions where faculty, students and resources are deeply engaged with the community, or as institutions where curriculum, graduates, research agendas, and regional community development are all deeply shaped by this engagement. Neither the grand vision, nor the concrete indicators for a truly "engaged campus" as articulated by numerous scholars of civic engagement are notably in place (Staudt and Natalicio 2006; Furco 2002a, 2002b; Holland 1997; Bringle and Hatcher 1996).

And yet, not until they find ways to create system-wide, responsive postures vis-à-vis their communities will these institutions: (a) communicate to their students and faculties the message that civic work is urgent, important, and worthwhile; (b) make an impact on their communities, such that they address both socio-economic challenges and address the growing critique that these institutions widen rather than close important class, cultural and fiscal gaps; and (c) set examples by which other institutions will need to respond as a matter of necessity and competition.

Research Happens Here

The fact that these institutions are predominantly private and thus shielded to varying degrees from the pressures of public funding and accountability is only part of the picture. Despite their private sources of support and governance, these institutions are still subject to important internal and external pressures to "produce" public benefits. This is true whether those benefits are viewed as local goods (e.g. contributions to local community needs, payments in lieu of taxes – PLOT, etc.) or as global goods (e.g. production of public sector leaders).

Overall, however, the expectation from liberal arts colleges is that their primary contribution is to produce capable, critical-thinking graduates. Liberal arts colleges are often misunderstood in their stereotype as purely and quintessential residential, student-centered learning environments. They are generally not viewed as likely or potential sources of scholarly production. The capacity of liberal arts colleges that do not appear as "knowledge mills" to impact communities by producing relevant and useful (i.e. applied) research and analysis is often viewed as inherently limited. Yet university-community partnerships are often considered valuable for their research potential and for their potential to apply research knowledge to solving practical community problems. In the often rural, semi-rural or suburban settings common to many liberal arts colleges, community members and organizations may be more accustomed to interacting with students as volunteers more than as learners; infrequently as researchers and problem-solvers. They interact with liberal arts institutions as providers of charitable contributions more than as pursuers of knowledge, of educational value, and of research questions in campus-community partnership, even where the occasional faculty or student project breaks this mold.

At these institutions, community service-learning courses, in which students receive academic credit for community work and faculty members pursue community-based research in partnership with local organizations, are also relatively less common. Where some view the idealized liberal arts educational experience as a learner's or scholar's retreat, the stereotypical view of learning processes as aloof or inward-looking is hardly surprising. Faculty and administrators at such institutions may also be more accustomed to viewing the community as sources of need or as targets of charitable cause than as learning and research opportunities from which students and faculty might tangibly benefit. Communities in this milieu are as likely to appear as net absorbers of resources as contributors to educational practice.

These days, however, a rising "research culture" in much of higher education has affected this sector in ways that are significant and relevant. Liberal arts colleges and their faculties have, in ways small and large, been subject to sector-wide pressures to increase their institutional research profile. The academic job market has a lot to do with this, because a "seller's market" for jobs among Ph.D.s in many fields crept more firmly into place during the 1980s and 1990s. Advanced degree recipient numbers exceeded numbers of available jobs, and the selective market for departments enabled them to pick and choose perhaps even more than before. Among candidates, the

distinguishing criterion with the greatest clarity and impact is often research promise. Publications and grants appear as measures of achievement and peer regard, and the profiles budding scholars raise for themselves promise benefits that are seen as benefits to rub off on their departments and institutions.

By the same token, the search for new colleagues perennially suffers from a lack in adequate indicators of teaching promise and, for the most part, from a dearth of candidates with experience to show anyway. Most recent doctoral students still emerge from graduate programs not emphasizing teaching in their disciplinary preparation, though opportunities are increasingly emerging. The candidate search, however, still tilts heavily toward measures of research productivity that are traditional and narrow. As faculty themselves are rewarded more and more for devoting "discretionary time" to research (Milem, Berger and Dey 2000), these market conditions transform faculty-hiring priorities in the same vector. Generational shifts underway among the faculties at such institutions result now in waves of new scholars with ambitious research agendas.

Measures of the degree to which these phenomena have turned departments at liberal arts institutions into homes for research scholars, or—more to the point—turned those departments and institutions into research mills are hard to come by. I stand at an illuminating vantage point upon this as a development officer responsible for sponsored research support at a liberal arts college. I have witnessed growth in external support—often peer-reviewed and thus a key piece of the faculty achievement portfolio—as measured by at least three relevant indicators. First, at my own institution, since 1996 (when I began in this role), I have witnessed a dramatic increase in the annual average award amounts for external research funds, from just over $1 million to now $4-5 million over the last four years. I would love to claim credit for this growth and consider myself a skilled advisor to faculty; however, the more important cause of the growth is the large generational shift coinciding with my tenure. More new faculty joined the college workforce with more ambitious research agendas. That change meant more research grants and more dollars, whatever role I may or may not play.

Second, in 1997, I joined with colleagues from Wellesley, Middlebury, Bryn Mawr, Vassar and other institutions to co-found a "support group" for professionals who do what we do—supporting faculty pursuit of competitive grants, fellowships, awards, and other forms of external sponsorship and funding. We found ourselves in the (then) unusual position of supporting growth in faculty research ambition at institutions (then) not oriented to supporting external research sponsorship. Liberal arts colleges were not then—and many are still not now—fully equipped to handle the "pre-award" and "post-award" consequences of an intensely research/grant-active faculty. A listserv and annual conference, more than an "organization," CLASP (Colleges of Liberal Arts Sponsored Programs) has rapidly gone from about a dozen participants to now over forty institutional and individual participants, and is still growing. The degree to which individuals at these institutions are increasingly seeking collegial support for sponsored research in this relatively different environment for faculty scholarship is matched by, maybe even caused by, increased institutional emphasis upon such work. More development offices at more liberal arts institutions are expanding the levels of

support and expertise they devote to faculty seeking research grants. Accompanying the growth of CLASP is a growing interest among development offices at these institutions in building capacity and expertise to support faculty scholarship. This, too, represents institutional prioritization of this growth. Institutions justify this on the basis of the wider institutional gains possible from such growth (I turn to this below).

Third, participants in CLASP provide, in their annual reporting about the numbers and amounts of primarily research grants and awards, a picture of growth across these institutions much like the one I have seen at my own. (These are numbers shared with CLASP members for information only, so it is not possible to publish them here.) The trends are clear: among a subset of significant or prominent private liberal arts colleges (as measured by their endowments, by their ranking in national ranking systems, or by their production of graduates who continue onward to advanced degrees) the pursuit and receipt of larger numbers of external awards and dollars has taken on greater importance. In many cases successes include enhanced results from peer-reviewed processes at places like the National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health and National Endowment for the Humanities, and in other cases increases in private foundation and corporate sponsors for faculty research.

Thus, the fact is that there are important ways in which at least some liberal arts colleges, affected by these trends, are expanding the numbers of faculty members and students conducting scholarly research and enhancing the facilities and programs underwritten by external fiscal support. This is sometimes matched by an expansion of internal support resources and infrastructure as well. As a result, such institutions are more and more engaging in the very same kinds of work metropolitan universities support when they jointly declare that "creation, interpretation, dissemination, and application of knowledge are the fundamental functions of our institutions," and that they "accept a broad responsibility to bring these functions to bear on our metropolitan regions" (Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities - CUMU 2006).

Research and the Prestige Economy

Important market-related and educational considerations contextualize the roles and purposes of establishing reputable research programs at predominantly undergraduate, private institutions. These differ somewhat from what we typically know or expect from research universities, and they also provide an important context for understanding where the challenges of and opportunities for civic engagement lie. So it is worth spelling out some of the institutional considerations that shape the nature and purposes of scholarly research in these settings.

Higher education is a competitive economy in which the pursuit of tuition dollars and charitable gifts, quality students and talented scholars requires institutions to emphasize activities that produce the most return on investment in advancing institutional status, and efforts that project a compelling, distinctive identity to prospective donors, applicants, and faculty. This is not just essential to attaining competitive advantage, but sometimes it is a matter of survival. This is especially true

for smaller institutions in a changing, high-stakes marketplace (Winston 2000; McPherson and Schapiro 1999).

For a growing subset of selective liberal arts colleges, the pursuit of prominent standing and distinctive identity has become hitched to the enhancement of the institution's research enterprise, because faculty research productivity is believed to yield several inter-related goods. National and disciplinary recognition for scholarly excellence can come from both the quality and volume of publications, awards, grants and media attention. Institutional track records of attracting high-achieving graduates and then launching them onward to advanced degrees and high-profile careers feeds and enhances that distinctive identity. Increased capacity to recruit and retain more students and faculty who can repeat the cycle—reproducing distinction, reputation and identity—stems from these desirable results. Ultimately, a research-active faculty is seen to serve all of these goals. High levels of research activity help institutions achieve and maintain prestigious reputations just as the work aims to advance disciplinary knowledge. The enterprises are mutually reinforcing and sustain access to other goods as well.

Being a "research college" is not an either/or proposition (in competition with maintaining the reputation for excellent teaching). It is a question of degrees—degrees to which departments have, in recent decades, hired new colleagues as much or more upon their research records and promises as upon their alignment with curricular priorities; degrees to which administrations have either practiced or signaled the prioritization of such measurable forms of scholarship as peer-reviewed publication, fellowship, grant and award accumulation in the tenure and promotion processes; degrees to which students on tracks to post-baccalaureate attainment and academic careers—and in departments more successful at putting them there—gain access to more resources, better facilities, or prominence in the institutional public relations machinery.

But this is not a phenomenon measured solely by benchmarks and yardsticks used by research universities or by the CLASP phenomena previously described; that is, numbers of federal research dollars, amounts of grants and contracts from public and private sector sources, and successes with prestigious awards and fellowships. At more and more liberal arts colleges, the rise of research culture is expressed in a vastly more complex interaction among faculty and student educational priorities. It is partly a matter of providing a particular and increasingly popular sort of teaching and learning experience.

The early and meaningful involvement of undergraduates in research experiences is increasingly understood as a *sine qua non* of the top liberal arts colleges. Institutions are increasingly guiding funding to undergraduate research opportunities for they are understood to enhance students' educational and developmental experiences and to increase capacities to independently formulate and pursue lines of inquiry (Seymour, Hunter, Laursen, and Deantoni 2004).

The recent *Academic Excellence* study drew attention to the results of these trends, highlighting the impressive track records liberal arts colleges are achieving in producing scholarship and graduates who go on to graduate and medical degrees. The report notes that approximately 25 percent of published papers by science faculty in the 133 predominantly undergraduate institutions surveyed included student co-authors (Research Corporation 2002). Colleges with strong undergraduate research programs additionally benefit from enhanced means to attract and retain high quality and motivated students.

This, by the way, also feeds a healthy reputational standing for faculty and institutions. Students apply experiential and developmental advantages from undergraduate research involvement to gain entry to prestigious graduate and professional schools, while public relations, advancement, and external evaluation machinery all enable these student outcomes to feed institutional reputation. Peer evaluation processes for scholarly publications and grant applications, and accreditation, tenure and promotion processes all illustrate benefits of the positive practices and results of productive undergraduate research as a learning model. Grant makers reward productivity in the numbers or quality of graduate school placements as such measures factor into proposal review processes.

All three "goods"—recognition for scholarly excellence, reputation for high-profile high-achieving graduates, and enhanced capacity to sustain both enterprises—weave together in what James English (2005) has called an "Economy of Prestige." What for English is an interplay between cultural and financial value in external acknowledgement and reward, is among institutions of higher education a mutually-reinforcing relationship between reputation, research and institutional identity. Whatever one may think about the motivations and effects of this economy of prestige or about the highly absorbing and powerful "culture of research" (Finnegan and Gamson 1996), two facts remain: first, these forces are endemic to higher education and not just peculiar to these institutions; and second, they do shape local priorities.

Research Colleges and Civic Engagement

In the 1980s and 1990s, the "Oberlin Report" (Davis-Van Atta 1985) and Breneman (1994) respectively called those liberal arts institutions that began to support more ambitious faculty scholarship "research colleges." Others interested in research-teaching relationships in liberal arts colleges identified the marriage between learning and inquiry as a form of "distinctive scholarship" that is as much about quality teaching as about pushing the boundaries of disciplinary knowledge (Ruscio 1987; McCaughey 1994).

Studying these phenomena, Alexander Astin and Mitchell Chang found that high performance in both teaching and research is to a certain degree a zero-sum game, but that through modest compromises (more "give" on the research emphasis) institutions can successfully emphasize both. Furthermore, once Astin and Chang developed criteria for assessing "high" performance in indicators they call "Research Orientation" and

"Student Orientation," and then identified a group of liberal arts colleges that effectively balance the two, they found that "virtually every institution that we would add to this group is also a selective private college. In other words, no other type of American higher education institution manages to emphasize both of these fundamental institutional functions at the same time" (1995). Aligning with this capacity for a double-act in combining quality teaching with research are several key institutional assets—significant financial resources, high-achieving and comparatively high socio-economic status students (relative to other institutional types), and faculty supportive of and engaged in collaborative and interdisciplinary teaching and scholarship.

So, where, in this milieu, do the broader civic engagement challenges of developing communities, embracing diversity in multi-faceted forms, and educating aware and capable civic leaders fit in? It is too easy to criticize bluntly the "ratcheting" expectations of ever-greater research pressures for the non-participation that this essay began by critiquing. Much hand-wringing accompanies the discussion of the ascendancy of research over teaching and service, as comparatively less rewarded and often less resourced components of faculty professional work. Many scholars of higher education have understandably come to share Ernest Boyer's (1990) concern that the prioritization of traditional research (or "discovery") leaves other forms of scholarship short-changed, including a scholarship of teaching and learning and a scholarship of application or engagement. Yet the trade-off between the research imperative and community engagement may not be so "zero-sum" as we might think.

Communities urgently want academics to stop talking and start responding to social service, educational, development and leadership challenges. That call is even more salient where institutions appear as overtly rich with human, financial and physical capital yet lack accessible entry points or a locally engaged, responsive history. How might institutions that face the range of sectoral and market phenomena described above, match priorities and resources now in place with the socio-economic challenges communities raise and learning assets they offer?

Scholars of civic engagement have learned a lot about how and when institutions adopt policies and practices that support student and faculty involvement in the community. Most important among these is that local culture and priorities must define the nature and purposes of college-community partnership and also shape the forms of civic engagement (Holland and Gelmon 1998). Overall, the challenges and opportunities presented above suggest that there are strong reasons to jointly consider the aims to enhance opportunities for undergraduate research and to enhance opportunities for community-based learning emerging from the wider discourse on civic engagement in higher education. An integrated approach involving more intentional coordination and application of existing institutional strengths and resources to these needs could create valuable synergies. This coordination is also consistent with what scholars of civic engagement have learned about how and when colleges succeed in institutionalizing successful community-based learning. Among the most important and relevant lessons among these are that institutions achieve success:

a) when local culture and priorities have defined the nature and purposes of college-community partnership, and shaped the forms of civic engagement (Holland and Gelmon 1998; Furco 2002a);

b) when such work is backed by substantial and ongoing institutional strategic planning, and when it is vested with leadership that establishes and maintains academic integrity (Bringle and Hatcher 2000)

c) when a commitment exists or is developed to assess impacts and outcomes, both on student learning and on community partners (Holland 2001)

d) when institutions have made commitments to administrative leadership and coordination, for addressing inevitable relationship and logistical problems, issues of reciprocal benefit, and challenges of sustainability (Hartley, Harkavy, and Benson 2005; Hinck and Brandell 2000; Bringle and Hatcher 2000; Furco 2002a).

Given that, the most likely route to improving civic engagement among this particular subset of institutions could well be the development of meaningful and relevant undergraduate research experiences, tied to societal needs—experiences which hold great promise to enhance student learning, scholarly output, and the profile of faculty members, students, and institutions as they attend to community needs and engage in off-campus problem-analysis and resolution.

Kerry Strand (a liberal arts college faculty member) and her colleagues have produced an excellent guide to principles and practices in bringing community-based research systematically into the curriculum (Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker, and Donohue 2003). This work and many others present models for employing undergraduate students and faculty in educationally-sound and beneficial research projects. In fact, most of the curricular mechanisms to bring this form of college-community partnership to fruition, and most of the infrastructure to bring service-learning into the curriculum already exist at many liberal arts colleges.

Concurrent with and related to growth in the faculty research enterprise among undergraduate institutions, an intensive expansion of undergraduate research has been underway among a widening range of institutions. The Council for Undergraduate Research (CUR), a professional development and advocacy organization advancing the undergraduate research "model" for faculty-student collaboration since the 1970s, reports membership that is expanding in institutional numbers, institutional types, and disciplinary areas. CUR member institutions (over four hundred now) are experiencing steady growth in the numbers of student-faculty research collaborations. There is much experience—with success—embedded in existing, "traditional" forms and purposes of student learning and research via undergraduate research that community-based practices could draw upon (Strand et al. 2003).

CUR models are commonly grounded in multi- or interdisciplinary approaches to studying and addressing complex societal phenomena and problems and are frequently

framed as both a route to fostering liberal learning among undergraduates (e.g. developing critical thinking, research, writing and communication skills; knowledge of and appreciation for diverse cultures and communities, etc.) and to stewarding productive campus-community institutional relations through improved and reciprocally beneficial partnerships. Natural off-campus partners for such work include civic and non-profit organizations in human and social services, the environment, education, community and economic development, etc. Outcomes and products from collaborative work with such organizations range from more "traditional" scholarly products such as journal publications and conference posters or papers to public dissemination in briefings to creative, narrative, and/or visual media presentations. Most commonly, community-based research projects could take form as semester- and year-long, course-based team study projects or as separate research projects undertaken by students under faculty and community organization joint supervision, both for term-time and/or summer credit, and as volunteer or paid work.

Similarly, all of these institutions have well-established community service offices, and many have internship programs and/or at least modest examples of service-oriented faculty and student field research to draw upon as models and as network entry points to connect with individuals and organizations in surrounding communities. The internship in particular has been a growing vehicle for liberal colleges to enable students to gain "real world" work experience, and while these programs have been valuable experimentation and networking experiences, educators and administrators have wrestled with the challenges of integrating these experiences into the pre- and post-internship curriculum. Best practices from existing programs may offer promising solutions such as the integration of research training and research collaboration into internship experiences, pre-orientation or post-experience curricular integration. In practice this might mean the development of sequences among summer and inter-term internships, term-time community-based learning experiences via coursework and independent study, "capstone" curricular vehicles for senior students—all of which involve community placements and strong teams of joint community-academic supervision. Students and faculty alike would need to be given clear expectations and equivalent standards of rigor to apply to the scholarly and community outcomes from their work. Critical to the ethical and sustainable practice of all this is a strong faculty, departmental, and institutional commitment to research and learning relationships that are reciprocal not extractive and that produce useful and not irrelevant knowledge and products.

Modest additions to these existing practices and structures that might meet civic engagement goals could include the development of curricula or faculty advising guidelines, better documentation regarding opportunities and sequences, and modest development activities for faculty designed to enhance their capacity to advise students on course, volunteer service, summer and inter-term work and experiential learning, and independent study choices they make. Students along with their faculty and student colleagues in their classes can enormously benefit from the "praxis" possibilities by finding opportunities through such sequencing to reflect upon experience, framing it with theoretical analysis, and developing additional lines of inquiry for themselves and their community and faculty partners.

"Bookending" experiences, such as thematic first-year seminars based on community themes and senior "capstone" courses that enable students individually or in teams to take on semester- and year-long research projects, can be ideal vehicles for encouraging community-based, collaborative and often interdisciplinary research projects. The potential is enormous for such projects to simultaneously serve such educational goals as enhancing disciplinary or interdisciplinary content knowledge; developing critical inquiry and analytic skills; breaching important campus-community physical, class and cultural divides while also meeting immediate and long-term community organization needs in the process. The limits are upon imagination, logistics, and resources such as staff, student, and faculty time. Nonetheless, these are fundamentally goals that are consistent, and not in competition, with traditional liberal and humanistic development goals (Zlotkowski 2001), citizenship development and social responsibility (Barber and Battistoni 1994; Barber 1992), and other educational aims.

Conclusions

Overall it seems a natural fit to connect the steadily increasing pressures to develop educational approaches to civic and social responsibility and responsive postures toward community needs at both the local and global levels, with this expanding capacity to support productive and meaningful scholarly and applied inquiry by undergraduate faculty and students. Some institutions have begun to do so. The biggest leaps, it seems, may be perceptual—from viewing community work as student-driven and volunteer service activities to making community-based learning valued and intentional parts of the curricular, learning, scholarly enterprise. Progress may also depend on the move from viewing community-based knowledge and experiential pedagogies as fostering separate, vocational and even lesser epistemologies, to vesting off campus, extra-classroom learning opportunities, and recognizing community knowledge as having genuine, inherent value and acknowledging its enormous potential to inform and advance scholarship and problem-solving at the same time (Schön 1995). It is in this sense that private, "elite" liberal arts colleges, shouldering still some baggage of the "ivory tower" or "finishing school" archetype, have the most progress to make—yet the most to gain—in becoming truly "metropolitan" in their outlook.

Certainly the alignment of civic engagement with the "research imperative" and its associated pressures is neither the exclusive route to engaging liberal arts colleges in their communities nor without associated concerns. Service-learning and civic engagement more generally are not exclusively about research, nor should they be. There is a full spectrum of activities that engage colleges and communities in collaboration that must remain broad and flexible. The self-interest built into any exclusive alignment between civic engagement and the research enterprise must be continually examined, lest the alignment import what Finnegan and Gamson problematize as a "culture of research" (1996) into community work. Other enterprises like teaching and community service become comparatively devalued in this perspective. Like other traditional paradigms for scholarly research, community-based research from a narrow conception of value (the creation of scholarly knowledge, the academic publication or presentation as its valued form) could theoretically carry

associated but hidden costs. The very utilitarian idea that such community partnerships should serve the advancement of scholarly goals has a deservedly long and checkered history as unidirectional and sometimes fundamentally exploitive. This could be inherently at odds with the broader messages of moral and social responsibility that liberal education aims to impart to students and faculty alike.

Nonetheless, Trinity College's Alta Lash, a sociologist, community organizer, and Director of the Trinity Center for Neighborhoods, once framed for me a compelling view of campus-community courtship. When asked about Trinity's research partnerships operating in the college's neighborhood and what motivated them, she acknowledged the important and valuable role of mutual self-interest in facilitating ongoing collaborations. "I trust self-interest more than I trust charity—self-interest is much more predictable, and much more sustainable." As a practical matter, this is simply a call for alignment between activities and outputs already valued within the institution and community needs and assets. It seems most promising because it is most likely to produce the greatest number of immediate, sustainable, and mutually beneficial forms of college-community partnership for the "research college." The alignment of community needs with learning through this approach promises more than enough self-interest to go around.

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