

Jeffrey L. Bernstein

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Reclaiming the democratic purposes of American higher education

Tracing the trajectory of the civic engagement movement

MATTHEW HARTLEY

ABSTRACT

American colleges and universities have historically sought to promote an enlightened citizenry. In the early 1980s many felt that this civic purpose was in danger of being lost. What unfolded was a widespread educational reform movement aimed at reasserting the public and democratic purpose of American higher education. This article traces the trajectory of this movement and notes a significant emergent tension among movement members – the question of whether to seek broad-based legitimacy within the academy by aligning the efforts with disciplinary norms or to challenge the status quo and attempt to transform higher education and align its efforts with the pressing needs of America's democracy.

KEYWORDS

civic engagement, civic education, education reform movements

Introduction

Preparing an enlightened citizenry is an instructional purpose with deep roots in American higher education. In 1749, Benjamin Franklin published a pamphlet entitled, 'Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania [sic]' in which he envisioned a college (later the University of Pennsylvania) that would instil in students an 'Inclination join'd with an Ability to serve mankind, one's country, Friends and Family.' This civic impulse was echoed in the founding documents of hundreds of private colleges established in the aftermath of the American Revolution. They formed the very basis for the land-grant movement that was established by the Morrill Act of 1862. When asked what accounted for the great Midwest-

ern progressive reforms at the dawn of the twentieth century, Charles McCarthy, the first legislative librarian of the United States, replied, 'a combination of soil and seminar': universities dedicated to solving pressing, practical problems that led to enlightened civic leadership.

By the 1980s, however, many had come to feel that American higher education was in danger of losing its public purpose (Hartley and Hollander 2005). Such concerns gave rise to a host of efforts aimed at re-asserting the civic purposes of colleges and universities (Boyer 1990; Ehrlich 2000; Newman 1985). Networks began to form and dozens of initiatives were launched with civic aims (Hollander and Hartley 2000). To offer one example, Campus Compact, a coalition of college and university presidents intent on promoting civic engagement, was conceived by three presidents in 1985. By 1995 it had 520 members and in 2008, more than 1,100 members – approximately a quarter of all post-secondary institutions in the United States.

A number of strategies have been advanced to promote civic engagement. These include integrating community-based activities into courses in order to allow students to grapple with complex real-world problems (that is, service-learning) (Eyler and Giles 1999; Stanton et al. 1999), reorienting scholarly activities to address pressing societal and community concerns (e.g., community-based research and action research) (Boyer 1990; Driscoll and Lynton 1999; O'Meara and Rice 2005), the development of sustained and reciprocal university/community partnerships (Harkavy and Wiewel 1995; Jacoby 2003; Maurasse 2001), and preparing students to live in an increasingly diverse and inter-connected world (Gurin et al. 2002; Musil 2005).

The scope of these efforts, which have involved tens of thousands of people, has led some scholars to liken them to a movement (Hollander and Hartley 2000; Kezar et al. 2005). Certainly this is how many individuals championing these efforts have described the task at hand (Hollander 2007; Meisel and Hackett 1986; Stanton et al. 1999). However, as this movement sought wider legitimacy, conflicts arose regarding its purpose. Should the movement seek to disrupt prevailing academic norms or gently amend them? Is teaching students to develop competency in a discipline sufficient or, in the words of bell

hooks, should we also be teaching them to transgress (hooks 1994)? The purpose of this article is to describe how the movement unfolded and how these ideological debates have produced a conception of civic engagement that calls for further revision if it is to fulfil its original democratic promise.

The analysis presented here is based on several data sources including a review from 1980 to the present of publications from several higher education associations (the Association of American Colleges and Universities [AAC&U], the American Association for Higher Education [AAHE], and the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges [NASULGC]). It is also based on an extensive review of archival documents from Campus Compact, the organisation set up by college presidents to promote civic engagement, as mentioned above. This material includes quarterly newsletters, annual reports, member survey data, memoranda, minutes from board meetings, presidential addresses, and state compact reports. Campus Compact deserves particular attention because of its leading role in advancing this cause (Colby et al. 2003; Corrigan 2002). Furthermore, the organisation's structure, with a network of 31 state offices, has enabled it to gather information on a wide range of engagement efforts happening across the United States.

This account is also informed by a qualitative study I conducted involving interviews with 123 individuals, which is a common approach in social movement research (Blee and Taylor 2002). The interviews were semi-structured and protocols were developed to elicit reflections on the particular initiatives with which individual participants were involved. Wherever possible, several people were interviewed about key events. This use of the 'overlap method' (Lincoln and Guba 1985: 314) was an invaluable means of gaining multiple perspectives on key events and cross-checking facts. The names for the initial group of participants in the study were identified during the document analysis phase. Then these participants were asked to name other important contributors to the movement, a variation on the chain or snowball sampling technique (Bogdan and Bilken 1992; Patton 1990).

Data from these interviews were captured in written notes and 109 of the interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. I then performed 'multiple readings of the entire set of field notes' (Erikson 1986: 149), identified and coded emergent themes and adjusted the coding rubric as the analysis moved forward and patterns emerged (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Quotes that appear in the article without citations are drawn from these interviews (including several participants who wished to remain anonymous.)

The movement's origins

Movements are the offspring of discontent. The early 1980s were troubled times for American higher education. A weak economy and a projected demographic decline led some experts to make dire predictions about its future (Keller 1983). Many institutions responded with an increasingly market-centred approach, with students as customers: what the customers wanted were jobs (Bloom et al. 2006). In 1971, half of all students (49 per cent) said they were attending college 'to be able to make more money' and by 1991 that had climbed to three-quarters (74.7 per cent) (Astin 1998). Pre-professional programmes proliferated and quickly superseded traditional liberal arts majors on many campuses (Breneman 1994). This shift in academic mission – trying to be all things to all people – created significant problems at some institutions (Chaffee 1984; Hartley 2002). Faculty discontent grew. In an interview in 1986, Ernest Boyer summarised the mood on campuses he had visited for research (Boyer 1987): '[W]e didn't find dramatic examples of failure; rather, we found a loss of vision, of vitality, a sense of marking time' (Marchese 1986: 10).

Another concern that emerged revolved around the political disaffection of America's youth. Newspaper accounts made frequent invidious comparisons between the career-minded college students of the 1980s and the idealistic students of the 1960s. Such concerns were echoed within the academy as well. In 1982, the American Association of Colleges¹ and the Kettering Foundation co-sponsored a special issue of *Liberal Education* on 'the civic purposes of liberal learning'. David

Mathews, the president of Kettering, summed up the collective mood in the introductory article, 'as I listen to the more perceptive among us diagnose the civic order, I find a common thread of disquiet that relates to the underpinnings of the civic enterprise – to our capacity to act together as a people' (Mathews 1982). What, then, might serve as an antidote to this fragmentation and civic disengagement? The answer, in the 1980s, became public or community service – volunteerism outside the confines of the classroom.

Public and community service

On 6 January 1984, recent Harvard graduate Wayne Meisel began a 'walk for action' beginning at Colby College in Waterville, Maine and ending in Washington, DC. Meisel would ultimately visit 67 campuses. 'I'd just arrive and ask someone if I could sleep on his floor. And over the next couple of days I'd track down the chaplain or the newspaper editor or the president and discuss community-service programmes. And over and over again the person I talked to would get excited' (McKibben 1985). Meisel wanted to encourage 'a lifelong commitment to community service, and ... promote sensitive, thoughtful and effective citizenship and leadership' (McKibben 1985). In a flier he developed to introduce himself, Meisel argued that rather than being apathetic, students were the victims of 'a society which unknowingly and unintentionally fails to inspire, tap, and channel their resources'.

Meisel was clear about avoiding political activism. Recalling his time at Harvard, Meisel explained: 'I saw a group of politically active knee-jerk liberals on the one hand and on the other hand there was a group of people who just wanted to head off to Wall Street to make money. I wanted to try to reach that big group of students in the middle, between the knee-jerks and the jerks'. Meisel challenged students to become volunteer leaders and his message resonated. When his walk ended on 29 May 1984 he and his classmate Bobby Hackett founded the Campus Outreach Opportunity League (COOL) (Meisel and Hackett 1986). Over the next few years, Meisel, Hackett and a small cadre of deeply committed staff members engaged in grassroots

organising on campuses. By 1989 COOL was working with student leaders at more than 450 institutions and hosting an annual meeting that drew together thousands of these students.

Other initiatives were forming at this time as well. In 1985, Frank Newman, the president of the Education Commission of the States, wrote a widely read Carnegie Foundation report entitled *Higher Education and the American Resurgence* (1985). In it he argued forcefully that 'education for citizenship [was] the most significant responsibility of the nation's schools and colleges' (Newman 1985). The report caught the attention of the Presidents of Stanford, Georgetown, and Brown, among the most selective universities in the country. Together they formed Campus Compact as a coalition of presidents personally committed to promoting civic engagement.² As mentioned above, to their surprise, in the first year 110 additional presidents joined the effort. In the first meeting of the coalition on 16 January 1986, Newman argued that its purpose was to teach students to 'see the larger issues as a citizen. [That] is the first task of the institution and ... how to achieve that has to be at the head of the list'.³ The question was how best to achieve that aim. The predominant form of community involvement occurring on campuses at that time was student volunteerism – activities such as serving soup in a soup kitchen, cleaning up trash in a local park or tutoring children at local schools. Comparatively few faculty members nationwide were experimenting with integrating community-based activities into their courses to enhance learning outcomes (service-learning). It is therefore not surprising that some of the presidents at the meeting expressed concern over the propriety of 'giving academic credit for service'. They understood 'service' to be a worthy but essentially extra-curricular activity. The group therefore decided that the most obvious way forward was to simply support volunteerism, an activity which the group preferred to call 'public service'.⁴ However, the nature of these experiences (many were short-term, few offered students meaningful opportunities to reflect on the complex socio-economic factors that caused the problem to begin with) fell far short of providing the 'education for citizenship' that Newman had written about so compellingly.

Linking service and the curriculum

Campus Compact was not the only national network promoting community-based activities. In 1980 the National Society of Experiential Education (NSEE),⁵ founded in 1971, was one of a few organizations championing this work. Among its membership (600 in 1980) were individuals highly experienced in linking service and learning. In the late 1980s, a small group of people with close ties to NSEE grew concerned about Campus Compact. Campus Compact's growing number of presidential members meant that it had the capacity to influence significantly the national discussion about civic engagement. A chief fear of the group was that volunteerism would end up becoming the accepted standard and, as one of them put it, '[institutions] could get on the band-wagon for cheap'. They had a bolder agenda – to transform the academy. They arranged a meeting with Campus Compact's Director Susan Stroud in 1986 to discuss these matters. As it turned out, a few members of the Campus Compact leadership had similar concerns. They felt the work had to be integrated with academic work. Stanford's Donald Kennedy and David Warren (then-president of Ohio Wesleyan) along with Tim Stanton, a staff member of Kennedy's at Stanford, took the lead in a study examining links between service and faculty work which resulted in a seminal report written by Stanton (Stanton 1990). That report significantly influenced the debate over the efficacy of linking service and the curriculum. It also signalled a decisive shift from community service to service-learning.

In 1990, Ernest Boyer contributed to the growing civic dialogue by offering a broader conception of faculty work in *Scholarship Reconsidered* (Boyer 1990), which included the application of scholarly expertise 'to pressing civic, social, economic, and moral problems': what came to be called the scholarship of engagement (Boyer 1996). He argued passionately and persuasively that 'what is needed [for higher education] is not just more programmes, but a larger purpose, a larger sense of mission, a larger clarity of direction in the nation's life' (Boyer 1994). The force of his message was amplified by AAHE launching an annual Forum on Faculty Roles and Rewards in 1991, which

drew together thousands of administrators and faculty members to reconceptualise the work of the professoriate. These efforts had a significant impact. In a recent survey of 729 Chief Academic Officers (CAOs) by O'Meara and Rice, two-thirds (68 per cent) indicated that their institution had engaged in efforts to encourage and reward a broader definition of scholarship and a third of that group (32 per cent) said that the ideas in Boyer's *Scholarship Reconsidered* were a 'major influence' in the decision to do so (O'Meara and Rice 2005).

In 1991, Campus Compact's Director, Susan Stroud, secured a major grant from the Ford Foundation to promote service-learning among its membership through the Integrating Service with Academic Study (ISAS) initiative. The benefits of this pedagogy had been recently codified in the *Principles of Best Practices for Combining Service and Learning* whose preamble linked the practice of service-learning with 'active citizenship and participation in community life'.⁶ These principles asserted that service-learning:

- is a highly effective (and legitimate) teaching strategy
- allows students to grasp the complexity of real-world problems and to develop skills in collective problem solving
- de-emphasises personal charitable acts (community service) and instead helps students understand the root causes of social problems
- ought to be conducted in a spirit of reciprocal partnership with the community.

Integrating Service with Academic Study (ISAS) ultimately funded 130 service-learning workshops nationwide. It also generated a renewed sense of purpose for Campus Compact's leadership. ISAS's Director, Sandra Enos, recalled, 'I almost felt like one of the apostles taking this gospel out and trying to convert [people.]'

In 1993, President Clinton established the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNS). Its Learn and Serve America Higher Education (LASHE) programme became a vitally important funding source for service-learning initiatives, which the Corporation sought to promote. A 1999 report from RAND, a non-profit think tank,⁷ indi-

cated that LASHE had awarded \$100 million to approximately 100 institutions of higher learning from 1995 to 1997 and an emphasis on sub-granting meant that these monies were distributed to over 500 campuses (Gray et al. 1999).

As more faculty members were introduced to service-learning and began using it in their teaching, ideological differences began to emerge among its proponents. Some advocates saw service-learning as a means of transforming students and the academy in the interests of promoting a just society.⁸ Others saw it primarily as a means of conveying disciplinary learning. Nowhere was this tension more evident than in an initiative directed at faculty called the Invisible College. The group was founded by John Wallace, a professor of philosophy at the University of Minnesota. The name was selected in homage to the organisation that preceded the Royal Society of London for the Improvement of Natural Knowledge. Likewise, Wallace hoped the group would draw on the knowledge of faculty and staff from across the country who were experienced in community-based teaching and learning and research in order to reveal the most current and promising practices. A significant ideological rift quickly emerged. As one participant noted:

It didn't take long to see that there were two very, very different visions of what the Invisible College should be. One vision was that this organization could provide the concrete resources that would legitimize faculty concerned with community-based work ... [Then there was] a group that saw the Invisible College as almost like a confraternity of people who share a certain spiritual vision of higher education as a moral-ethical force.

One of the most thoughtful advocates of the former position was Edward Zlotkowski who wrote in 1995:

Until very recently the service-learning movement has had an 'ideological' bias; i.e., it has tended to prioritize moral and/or civic questions related to the service experience. Such a focus reflects well on the movement's past but will not guarantee its future. ... Only by paying careful attention to the needs of in-

dividual disciplines and by allying itself with other academic interest groups will the service-learning movement succeed in becoming an established feature of American higher education (Zlotkowski 1995).

Zlotkowski went on to lead a project funded by the Atlantic Philanthropies and sponsored by the AAHE and Campus Compact, which produced 21 monographs that described the use of service-learning in a range of academic disciplines. But a predominant emphasis in the series was on using community-based experiences to illuminate disciplinary concepts, not using disciplinary expertise to address and alleviate problems facing our communities.

Within Campus Compact there were discussions about how best to draw in new members. Enos wrote a memorandum to the organization's leadership in 1996 and in it she quoted the work of Everett Rogers on the diffusion of innovations (Rogers 1995), Enos stated: '[W]e can generally suggest that the first wave [of service-learning adopters] is motivated by community concerns, sometimes tied to social and civic responsibility and social transformation, while the second wave is motivated by a strong perceived pedagogical value' (Enos 1996). Strategically, the increased emphasis on the pedagogical benefits of service-learning proved highly effective. Campus Compact experienced tremendous growth. At the end of 1989, Campus Compact had 202 members. By 1999 the number of member institutions stood at 689.

This pragmatic conception of service-learning became so pervasive that by the end of the 1990s, one pioneer, Nadinne Cruz, was shocked to find herself having to defend social justice as a possible outcome of service-learning at an association meeting (Stanton et al. 1999). Many of the early pioneers who championed the transformation of higher education, who were committed to promoting a more just society by helping students see the significant challenges facing our communities and cultivating in them the ability and the desire to make a difference, began to feel a sense of alienation within the movement. Increasingly they saw service-learning being promoted not as a strategy for advancing the larger cause of social justice but as an end in itself – a useful pedagogy and a better way to convey traditional disciplinary content. In

a real sense service-learning had emerged as the central project of the movement and a critical question began to emerge: was this a sufficiently bold agenda?

Where's the 'civic' in civic engagement?

The notion of advancing a broader civic agenda began to gain momentum. In 1997, the position of Director of Integrating Service with Academic Study (ISAS) opened up. John Saltmarsh, a historian who had spearheaded an innovative service-learning programme at Northeastern University, was invited to apply for the position. Despite his high regard for the project, Saltmarsh demurred. He did agree to talk with Campus Compact's leadership. 'I went down and I pretty much said to them, "Let's stop talking about service-learning. It's not that it's not important. But let's talk about reforming American higher education. That's what the Compact should be doing. That's what ISAS should be doing"'. Campus Compact's Executive Director, Elizabeth Hollander, had been thinking along similar lines (Hollander 1998). She prevailed upon Saltmarsh to help advance this effort.

In 1998, the National Commission on Civic Renewal, co-chaired by William J. Bennett and Senator Sam Nunn, issued a report decrying a decline in civic participation and indicating 'stirrings' of 'a new movement' (Staff 1997). Conspicuously absent in the report was any mention of higher education; thus it galvanised higher education associations. Hollander from Campus Compact began meeting with other associations leaders. In cooperation with the American Council on Education and the AAC&U, Campus Compact convened two meetings of university administrators, faculty members and foundation and association representatives at the Wingspread conference centre in Racine, Wisconsin, in December 1998 and in July 1999. What resulted was the 'Wingspread Declaration on Renewing the Civic Mission of the American Research University,' written by Harry Boyte and Elizabeth Hollander. The declaration asked how students, faculty, staff, and administrators, might, evoking the words of Harvard university's renowned president, Charles Eliot, become 'filled with the democratic

spirit' and promote 'a vibrant public culture' that 'values their moral and civic imaginations and their judgments, insights, and passions, while it recognizes and rewards their publicly engaged scholarship, lively teaching, and their contributions through public work' (Boyte and Hollander 1996: 10). In 1999, Campus Compact convened 51 university presidents at the Aspen Institute to set an agenda for promoting civic engagement. They issued the 'Presidents' Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education,' which was drafted by Thomas Ehrlich, a senior scholar at Carnegie and Elizabeth Hollander and was subsequently signed by 539 college and university presidents.⁹ The document underscored the fact that many community-engagement or service-learning efforts had fallen short:

We are encouraged that more and more students are volunteering and participating in public and community service, and we have all encouraged them to do so through curricular and co-curricular activity. However, this service is not leading students to embrace the duties of active citizenship and civic participation.

It called for a radical restructuring of the engagement movement around the formation of civic skills. Sadly, a follow-up project aimed at promoting this agenda never materialised.

In 1999, a second widely-circulated document on engagement was also published. 'Returning to Our Roots: The Engaged Institution' was developed by the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities, a group of 24 land-grant university presidents as well as foundation and corporate representatives.¹⁰ Pointing to 'a growing emphasis on accountability and productivity from trustees, legislators, and donors' the document defined engaged colleges and universities as 'institutions that have redesigned their teaching, research, and extension and service functions to become even more sympathetic and productively involved with their communities, however community may be defined' (1999: 9). The document called for a recommitment to the historic land-grant ideal of service to the state and it articulated seven principles: responsiveness to communities, regions and states;

respect for partners; academic neutrality; accessibility to 'outsiders;' integration or interdisciplinary work; coordination of institutional efforts; and the commitment of resources to these ends.

This conceptualisation of 'engagement' differed sharply from that of the Declaration. 'Returning to Our Roots' held up 'value neutrality' as a core principle, in stark contrast to the Declaration's admonition that faculty members and administrators ought to step up as moral agents. The call in 'Returning to Our Roots' to serve the local area and the state conforms to ideals found in the mission statements of most public four-year institutions (Morphew and Hartley 2006). With the exception of its emphasis on reciprocal community partnerships, the 'engaged university' in many respects conforms to the traditional university. The vision is practical, perhaps even prudent, but it is undeniably a more conventional one than the civically engaged university. Both the Declaration and 'Returning to our Roots' evoke similar methods (e.g., community-based learning, service-learning, the application of scholarly and community expertise in the mutual resolution of pressing problems) but their ends are divergent.

Recently, some civic engagement proponents have begun to question the willingness of the academy to commit to an engagement agenda (Bruckardt et al. 2004). Of particular concern is the tendency of institutional efforts to steer away from encouraging students to develop greater political knowledge and awareness. There are, however, some promising efforts that warrant attention. For example, the American Democracy Project, founded in 2003 by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, encourages deliberation on civic and political matters both in courses and in a variety of co-curricular venues at more than 200 institutions.¹¹ More recently, AAC&U's president Carol Schneider has established 'fostering social responsibility and civic engagement' as one of three key areas that comprise the 'New Academy' (Schneider 2005). She argues that to teach civic skills, 'We have to put Big Questions from our society directly into the college curriculum' (2005: 12). The work of The Democracy Imperative and the National Issues Forum are drawing together people on and off campus to grapple with important public policy issues.

Efforts that actively seek to teach civic competency, promising though they are, are still outnumbered by programmes that are content to emphasise community involvement (Colby et al. 2003). There is great value in having students work in their communities. It enables them to witness societal challenges firsthand. It fosters in participants a sense of responsibility to community (Astin and Sax 1998). But all too often what is missing are systematic instructional efforts aimed at helping students understand the complex socio-political factors that perpetuate the status quo. Students are rarely given the opportunity (or encouragement) to develop the acumen to challenge it and seek to change it. What has emerged is a strikingly apolitical 'civic' engagement.

Factors influencing the trajectory of the movement

Legitimacy comes at a price. One of the striking themes in the above narrative is the perennial and ephemeral nature of idealism in the academy. There are numerous instances where calls for renewing the academy impelled committed action. However, the same transformative agenda that quickens the hearts of true believers is often tempered as a wider circle of people are drawn to the movement and other ideas compete for ascendancy (Snow and Benford 1992). The ideas that endure are those that are convincing to the largest (or most influential) audiences who support the effort. Movements must adapt to gain broader currency. Furthermore, as ideas are diffused through a system, they must be modified to suit local contexts. The more complex an innovation, the more likely it is to be adapted to fit local contingencies (Rogers 1995). Adaptation allows adopters to make an innovation truly their own, which encourages commitment and sustainability. The more flexible an innovation is, the faster and wider its rate of adoption is likely to be. However, adaptation can also lead to distortion (Lewis and Siebold 1993). The challenge in the diffusion of an idea is maintaining a balance between accommodation and 'fidelity' to the original intent (Backer 2000).

This brief history reveals many instances of intentional (and perfectly reasonable) compromise. Although the movement emerged in part

out of concern for political disaffection, the activities that have been pursued (such as service-learning) are often a questionable remedy to this malady (Sax 1999). COOL was founded to promote student volunteer leadership, yet it avoided political activism. The original vision for the founding of Campus Compact – producing an educated citizenry for the American democracy – was quickly displaced by the widespread activity of volunteerism. While useful service may have been provided, it did little to encourage students to grapple with the underlying socio-economic and cultural sources of social problems. Although early on service-learning was viewed as a promising strategy for cultivating civic knowledge and agency, these aims were later subsumed by a more pragmatic pedagogical rationale: service-learning as an effective way of conveying disciplinary knowledge. A student may use a service-learning placement as a means of applying theoretical constructs from a discipline and never be asked to grapple with the socio-political forces that cause the problem to begin with or to imagine how a problematic status quo might be effectively challenged. Disciplinary preparation and democratic participation are potentially complementary ends but each requires a purposeful strategy.

Counting the costs

Advancing an agenda that is consonant with the values of the academy is a sensible approach for securing broad-based legitimacy. The virtue of pitching a large tent is that many people fit inside. Reflecting on the movement, David Mathews, President of the Kettering Foundation recently remarked: 'Anyone who wants to join in seems welcome; there are few definitional barriers' (Mathews 2005). However, without definitional focus and clarity, a movement may end up offending and inspiring no one.

The secret of an effective movement is that it balances the impulse to draw people in with a clear conception of its purpose that gives a sense of identity to its core members (Marwell and Oliver 1993). Ann Austin, who has conducted extensive research on faculty work life, has observed: 'The big worry I have is that many early career and as-

piring faculty are going to decide that the academy is not where they can live out their passions and will simply leave' (London 2003: 15). This concern was echoed in a recent Wingspread document entitled 'Calling the Question,' which identified the cultivation of a next generation of 'champions' of engagement as a key task (Bruckardt et al. 2004). The future of the engagement movement hangs tenuously on its ability to convey a compelling sense of purpose. America faces important tests as a democracy: immigration, the plight of the poor in the wealthiest nation on earth, creating a sustainable economy and the precarious trade-offs between safety and freedom. Such challenges are calls to change. The danger of a rather conventional conception of civic engagement, however, is that it will be inadequate to the task of inspiring and instructing the very people who in the years ahead will need to undertake the difficult transformational change that American democracy needs.

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Matthew Hartley is an associate professor of education at the University of Pennsylvania's graduate school of education. His research focuses on the governance of American colleges and universities. He is particularly interested in how academic communities define their educational purposes. His most recent research has focussed on a particular educational purpose: civic engagement.

Contact: University of Pennsylvania, Graduate School of Education, Policy, Management and Evaluation Division, 3700 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104-6216, U.S.A.

Email: hartley@gse.upenn.edu

Notes

1. The organisation renamed itself the American Association of Colleges and Universities in 1995.
2. The transcript of the proceedings of the association on 16 January 1986 names the group the 'Coalition of College Presidents for Civic Responsibility'.
3. Transcript of the meeting of the Coalition of College Presidents for Civic Responsibility, Georgetown University, 16 January 1986.
4. Their efforts helped usher in George H.W. Bush's National and Community Service Act of 1990 and President Bill Clinton's National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, which established the Corporation for National and Community Service in 1994.
5. In the 1980s the group was called the National Society for Internships and Experiential Education. It later dropped the word 'internships' in its name.
6. <http://www.apa.org/ed/slce/principles.html>
7. <http://www.rand.org/>
8. Such debates continue today. As Denson et al. observe: 'There is not agreement within the service-learning field that social justice ought to be an intended outcome of service-learning participation' (Denson, Vogelgesang and Sanchez 2005).
9. <http://www.compact.org/resources-for-presidents/presidents-declaration-on-the-civic-responsibility-of-higher-education/>
10. http://www.cpn.org/topics/youth/highered/pdfs/Land_Grant_Engaged_Institution.pdf
11. <http://www.aascu.org>

See also Project Pericles (www.projectpericles.org) and The Research Universities Civic Engagement Network (www.compact.org/initiatives/research_universities)

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