**Beyond Teaching and Learning:**

**Voices of the Next Generation of Engagement**

**Book Project Proposal**

**The Next Generation Engagement Writing Collective**

**DRAFT – January 5, 2011**

It has become increasingly apparent that higher education, as an industry driven by the culture of research universities, is struggling to reinvent itself in the face of new challenges—from shrinking public expenditures and unsustainable tuition prices to an efficiency-based consumer model and a declining focus on teaching and learning. Yet these challenges also present remarkable opportunities for innovation, experimentation, and civic purpose—and a broader look at where these new ideas and practices are likely to emerge. While large-scale change has been slow to emerge, there are indications that the next generation of students and scholars, a much more racially and ethnically *diverse* group, are increasingly *public* in their identities and practices and are developing *new patterns of engagement* that are changing the nature of teaching, learning, and knowledge generation. This book hopes to capture these changes through the voices of the next generation of engaged students and scholars.

While this conversation has been started in multiple settings over the past few years (see Hartley and Saltmarsh, *To Serve a Larger Purpose: Engagement for Democracy and the Transformation of Higher Education*, Temple University Press, Forthcoming; Fitzgerald et al, *Handbook of Engaged Scholarship*, Michigan Stage University Press, 2010), the focus of this proposed project is aimed at breaking new ground in other areas related to the future of higher education in the 21st century.

Specifically, we plan to address the connections and intersections between advances in *active and collaborative teaching, learning*, *and knowledge creation* with the movement towards *revitalizing the civic mission of higher education* through a collection of first person narratives, edited profiles, and provocative essays. By listening to the civic stories of the more diverse students and scholars entering the academy, we hope to begin to define new ways of seeing teaching, learning, and knowledge generation.

In 1995, Robert Barr and John Tagg articulated an important shift in higher education: from an instructional to a learner-centered paradigm. With the learning centered approach, they write, the college’s purpose serves “not to transfer knowledge but to create environments and experiences that bring students to discover and construct knowledge for themselves.”[[1]](#footnote-2)

This approach, they noted at the time, had still not found “complete expression in the structures and processes of any college;” and yet, full implementation alone is not the only deficiency. Listening to the more diverse and civically engaged voices of the next generation, now some fifteen years later, indicates that the learning centered paradigm is also not a sufficient ideal for those aspiring toward an engaged university. For instance, the community-based practices and collaborative public work at the core of the scholarship of engagement—and much next generation work—is virtually invisible under the learning paradigm.

Building on this insight, John Saltmarsh has found that reciprocal, co-creative, engagement is beginning to serve as the foundation for a new framework for teaching and learning, what he has termed a “Collaborative Paradigm.” This new paradigm sees promise in addressing global challenges by embracing a problem-centered commitment to participation by all stakeholders inside and outside university walls and across national boundaries.

Likewise, our experience with the Next Generation Project indicates that a new paradigm is emerging among college students and early career scholars, one that builds upon the learning centered approach, but also recognizes what Lawrence Cremin originally termed “the ecology of education” in which engagement with a diverse web of places, people, and experiences co-creates learning opportunities in multi-dimensional and complex ways. Given the digital and civic proclivities of the Millennial generation (those born approximately after 1980), along with the more diverse and cosmopolitan early career scholars who put often put civic engagement at the center of their professional identities, it should not be surprising to find that more interdependent and interconnected networked knowledge which has a public purpose is becoming more essential to the teaching and learning.

The re-emergence of the ecology of education, Cynthia Gibson and Nicholas Longo have noted, is partly the result of significant cultural transformation, especially the advent and adaptation of innovative technologies that have revolutionalized the way in which people communicate, learn, and work.   Today, knowledge and information can be absorbed and distributed instantaneously and in ways that allow for more voices to be included in what were once more narrow domains of experts and professionals.  Technology has also driven a shift to a more globalized society and economy—one in which poverty, substandard education, access to health care, climate change, and other public issues are the world’s problems—not just those of distinct countries.

Given these extraordinary changes, it is hardly surprising that young people (students and early career scholars) have (and will most likely continue to have) different notions about where and how “legitimate” learning can occur, including, most especially learning that takes place outside the boundaries of a traditional classroom. Thus, with this next generation, democratic engagement is becoming more central to teaching, learning, knowledge generation—and consequently, also driving new ideas of what it means to be a scholar.

This new scholarship becomes particularly useful, for instance, in thinking about the challenges associated with the increasing necessity of college access and retention. Thus, when looking at the evidence that the academic success of underserved students is enhanced by increased opportunities to participate in high-impact teaching and learning practices (See Roberto Ibarra, *Beyond Affirmative Action: Reframing the Context of Higher Education*, University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), it is essential to think differently about the nature of teaching and learning given the growing number of students of color and first generation college students entering colleges and universities. And conversely, it is the changing demographics of higher education, including increasing diversity among graduate students and faculty, which are also fueling the changing nature of teaching and learning.

By recognizing the importance of engagement in teaching and learning through a collaborative—or networked—paradigm, this book presents new ways of seeing university-collaboration: through the motivations, experiences, and interests of the current generation of college students, graduate students, and early career faculty/ higher education professionals. And as a result, we believe this next generation is helping to refine what it means to be a public scholar. For instance, we are beginning to see:

* ***Undergraduate students*** with more entrepreneurial sensibilities who are experienced in community service work, advocates for diversity, and have grown up in a global society with immediate access to information asking for a different model of teaching and learning. This more collaborative approach sees students as co-producers of knowledge, values the knowledge and experience they contribute to the educational process, shares authority for the process of knowledge generation and pedagogy, and allows them to practice and experiment with a public culture of democracy as part of the work of higher education.
* Graduate education and ***graduate students*** who tend to be more diverse, civically engaged, and active than previous generations and who are looking to connect their academic passions with their commitments to social justice and community building in constructive ways that don’t force them to choose between academic careers and community commitments.
* ***Early career faculty*** and higher education professionals who, because they often began engagement as undergraduates and then brought questions of public relevance and action into their graduate studies, begin their careers with inclinations toward engaged teaching and learning and collaborative knowledge generation with those outside the campus.

With this new generation of leaders other trends are also emerging:

* a growing recognition that in a global society it is necessary to ***balance the local with the cosmopolitan/international,*** along with a set of global competencies necessary for the 21st century;
* a strong commitment to ***access, inclusion,*** and ***social good*** in and through academic work***;***
* the use of ***technology*** in connecting and advancing civic engagement (in ways that were unthinkable to earlier generations); and
* a realization that ***civic and community renewal*** is part of the core mission of higher education, but that the university mission may, at times, be at odds with the broader community.

Thus, next generation engagement connects, in a systemic way, the changing landscape of higher education around issues such as: student access and retention, faculty and student diversity, engaged scholarship, community engagement, institutional rewards and institutional culture, and ultimately, the very nature of teaching and learning.

While these new practitioners and trends are in no ways the dominant forces in higher education, there are a growing number of centers, programs, and larger institutional initiatives dedicated to thinking about these issues. For instance, the New England Resource Center for Higher Education (NERCHE) in collaboration with Imagining America, the American Democracy Project of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), and a cadre of scholars and practitioners has been catalyzing dialogues on this theme over the past at campuses and conferences around the United States.

This book proposal is one outcome of these conversations.

**Format/Content**: The book would be a series of edited chapters and narratives by a diverse group of thought leaders/scholars who have been working in this area and who have name recognition both in higher education and beyond, national nonprofit leaders, and young people who are doing pioneering work charting the next generation of engagement.

The book will be written and edited to ensure that it is reader-friendly, accessible, and non-academic in tone. It will also include graphics to underscore main points, e.g., sidebars, boxes, charts, etc.

We expect the book to include approximately 12 to 15 chapters that are approximately 15-20 pages (double-spaced) in length and introductory and concluding chapters. We also hope to include narratives, interviews, and practitioner profiles with authors and other leaders throughout the book (and in multi-media formats to complement the book). The total length of the book will be approximately 250 pages (double spaced) with endnotes.

**Proposed Draft Outline of Book**

**Section I**: **The Collaborative Learning Paradigm and Networked Knowledge Generation**

Essays re-conceptualizing the learning and engagement paradigms, along with latest research on undergraduates, graduate students, and early career faculty

**Section II: New Public Scholars**

Narratives and practitioner profiles from undergraduates, graduate students, and early career faculty focusing on their civic identities, public work, and navigation of academia

**Section III: Future of Engagement**

Essays on Next Generation Engagement efforts moving forward and new models for teaching, learning, assessment, and collaboration that will reshape academia; will also include essays about the need to listen to the voices of the next generation to shape and change institutional reward systems, and cultures in higher education

**Audiences**: The primary audiences for this book will be faculty, staff, administrators, trustees, college students, and other scholars and educators across the country. Secondary audiences will include national and local nonprofit organizations focused on civic engagement; journalists and reporters for education and youth-focused media/print outlets (e.g., *Chronicle of Higher Education*, academic journals, *Youth Today,* websites, etc.); and foundations, corporations, and government agencies that support higher education, teaching and learning, and youth civic engagement.

**Dissemination**: The authors believe that this publication will only be as useful as it is disseminated; to that end, it is imperative that time and attention be dedicated to creating a strategic communications plan once the book is near completion. That plan may include a formal announcement that can be sent via email to thousands of individuals and institutions; a set of “one-pagers” that offer synopses of the various sections of the book; mailings to college/university libraries, listservs, and journals; solicitation of book reviews and articles; links on websites; and formal presentations at conferences and events. In addition, we hope to develop an interactive web site that includes the voices of the book—and others—in multi-media formats.

Because of the many high visibility partners involved in this project, including the American Democracy Project at AASCU, Imaging America, and NERCHE, along with closely affiliated groups such as Campus Compact, the Center for Democracy and Citizenship, CIRCLE at Tufts University, the Kettering Foundation, Mobilize.org, among others, we expect to have many networks to publicize and disseminate the book.Bottom of Form

1. Robert Barr and John Tagg “From Teaching to Learning,” 1995 (*Change*, Nov./Dec.) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)