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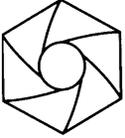
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Does Service-Learning Have a Future?

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Abstract

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 the movement's past but will not guarantee its future. What is needed now is a broad-based adjustment that invests far more intellectual energy in specifically academic concerns. Only by paying careful attention to the needs of individual 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.
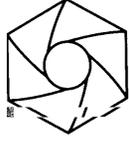
About the Author

Edward Zlotkowski received his B.A. in English and his Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from Yale University. He is a professor of English at Bentley College and in 1990 founded the Bentley Service-Learning Project, an institution-wide program that has involved in its work all of college's undergraduate academic departments, more than a quarter of its full-time faculty, and several thousand students. Dr. Zlotkowski has lectured and written on a variety of service-learning topics. He has consulted to Campus Compact and the Massachusetts Commission on Community Service as well as to individual colleges and universities. Under the auspices of the Invisible College and Campus Compact, he serves as general editor of a new monograph series exploring the relationship between service-learning and individual academic disciplines. He has recently been named a senior associate at the American Association for Higher Education

About the New England Resource Center for Higher Education

The New England Resource Center for Higher Education (NERCHE), founded in 1988, is dedicated to improving colleges and universities as workplaces, communities, and organizations. NERCHE addresses this issue through think tanks, research, consulting, professional development, and publications.

Service-Learning and the Crisis of Higher Education

At this year's meeting of the Ohio Campus Compact, national Campus Compact executive director Nancy Rhodes, gesturing towards an array of Campus Compact publications spread out on the table in front of her, jokingly remarked that half of them seemed to begin with the prefix "Re-." In fact, this is hardly surprising. Two years ago the Clinton-Gore administration arrived in Washington brandishing a copy of Osborne and Gaebler's *Reinventing Government* (1992). Two years later, the new Republican majority finds its own leader, Newt Gingrich, declaring: "Virtually every institution in America, except government, has reengineered themselves [sic] to become more efficient over the last decade" (*Boston Globe* 4/8/95).

But government is not the only major institution that has resisted what Gingrich calls "reengineering." American higher education also has, for the most part, continued with business as usual. Whether one looks at the agendas of professional conferences, the promotion and tenure criteria prevailing at individual institutions, or the pedagogies employed in the classroom, one could well believe little has changed since the sixties. To be sure, the wine poured in the old bottles is of more recent vintage, reflecting especially the ascendant power of women and minorities. Nevertheless, the defining infrastructures of the higher education system have remained remarkably stable—or inert—depending upon one's point of view.

Recently, however, even higher education has begun to experience a serious challenge to its core assumptions and priorities.   I refer here not only to the kinds of "Rethinking" (Kupiec 1993) and "Redesigning" (Jackson 1994) called for in the Campus Compact publications referred to above but also to the work of important educational thinkers such as Lynton and Elman (1987, 1993), Boyer (1990),and Rice (1991). Indeed, in a much discussed opinion piece published last year in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (3/9/94), Boyer eloquently summarizes his vision of necessary and fundamental change in higher education by calling for nothing less than a "New American College":

> What I'm describing might be called the "New American College," an institution that celebrates teaching and selectively supports research, while also taking special pride in its capacity to connect thought to action, theory to practice. This New American College would organize cross-disciplinary institutes around pressing social issues. Undergraduates at the college would participate in field projects, relating ideas to real life. Classrooms and laboratories would be extended to include clinics, youth centers, schools, and government offices. Faculty members would build partnerships with practitioners who would, in turn, come to campus as lecturers and student advisers.

The New American College, as a connected institution, would be committed to improving, in a very intentional way, the human condition. As clusters of such colleges formed, a new model of excellence in higher education would emerge, one that would enrich the campus, renew communities, and give new dignity and status to the scholarship of service.

The connections between this vision and service-learning are evident, but what is perhaps not so evident—at least at first glance—is the special developmental imperative Boyer's "new model of excellence" implies for service-learning. Indeed, I believe that unless service-learning educators heed that implied imperative, the future of the movement is very much in doubt.

Two years ago, Benjamin Barber and Richard Battistoni published an article entitled "A Season of Service: Introducing Service Learning into the Liberal Arts Curriculum" (1993) in which they attempted to lay out some of the more important distinctions and choices facing service-learning educators. Perhaps the most important of these involves the distinction between what they call "philanthropic" and "civic" rationales for engaging in service-learning:

> The first view is captured by the statement: "I am obliged to help others less fortunate than myself, and it will do my character good to do so!" The second, by the statement, "I cannot flourish unless the communities to which I belong flourish, and it is my enlightened self-interest to become a responsible member of those communities—whether they are my school, my neighborhood or my nation (or perhaps even my world)." (p. 236)

As Barber and Battistoni point out, the fact that these two approaches "may be mutually reinforcing in certain ways" should not obscure another fact; namely, that they "nonetheless pose contradictory choices and yield different pedagogical strategies."

Surely it is no coincidence that at the time this article was written Barber directed Rutgers' Walt Whitman Center for the Culture and Politics of Democracy while Battistoni directed the same institution's Civic Education and Community Service Program. Both authors are by training political scientists, and their article, appropriately published in the journal *PS: Political Science & Politics*, clearly reflects a disciplinary perspective and commitment. Such an observation, moreover, should not be taken as in any way prejudicial to the value or validity of the arguments they put forth. On the contrary, Barber and Battistoni's work represents an excellent example of something the service-learning movement has so far seen too little of: a critical exploration of service-learning issues addressed first and foremost to colleagues working in the same discipline.

When one reviews the literature that has thus far developed around service-learning, one may be surprised to discover how few contributions succeed in combining two of the key strengths of the Barber and Battistoni article; namely, (a) a language and a perspective especially suited to a particular discipline and (b) explicit recognition of the need for all service-learning courses—regardless of the ideological and tactical choices they embody—to evidence "critical depth and intellectual compass." This is not to deny that much hard work and serious thought has been successfully expended on a variety of service-learning issues. Primary among these have been the elaboration and exploration of guiding principles, and the description of successful courses and programs. Furthermore, such focuses reflect well the developmental needs of the movement as it has unfolded over the past five years. Indeed, it is largely due to the successful promulgation of such principles and such models that service-learning has finally begun to win a voice in the national educational dialogue.

But developmental needs do not in and of themselves fully account for the complexion of the service-learning movement as it has evolved thus far. As a phenomenon tied to the social and political upheavals of the past 30 years, the movement has, quite often, revealed a fundamental— if not determinant— ideological bias. Indeed, articulation of the meanings and mandates latent in the word "service" has claimed a not inconsiderable share of the energies of the movement's proponents. From the 1989 "Principles of Good Practice in Combining Service and Learning" to the 1995 National Gathering panel entitled "Charity to Justice," scores of service-learning sessions, presentations, and articles have devoted themselves to clarifying the ethos most appropriate to service-learning practice. Not infrequently, whatever else remains is then lumped together under the rubric of "nuts and bolts"—a telling phrase for educators committed to the value of experiential learning![1]

In her introduction to what is surely the single most useful service-learning resource published so far, *Combining Service and Learning: A Resource Book for Community and Public Service* (1990), editor Jane Kendall directly raises the question "Why This Resource Book Now?" Her answer is instructive for anyone trying to understand the disposition of the service-learning movement. Briefly tracing the roots of contemporary interest in service-learning to "a similar wave of interest in community and public service in the late 1960s and the early 1970s" (p. 7), Kendall goes on to identify three key lessons to be learned from that period— lessons that MUST be learned if the present "surge of interest [is] to last...rather

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1. A contradiction between experiential/inductive theory and discursive/deductive practice is often evident in service-learning forums and discussions. James Ostrow (1994), in "Sticking to Our Principles in Research," *NSEE Quarterly*, Vol. 19, Nr. 3., has examined the way in which this contradiction manifests itself in approaches to evaluation.

than be just another exciting, but short-lived wave" (p. 11). These lessons include the critical importance of

1. integrating service-learning programs into the central mission and goals of the schools and agencies where they are based;

2. establishing a balance of power between educational and community partners;

3. wedding reflection to experience.

Furthermore, in achieving these imperatives, Kendall clearly recognizes the pivotal role of the faculty—"the key to the long-term capacity of...institutions to commit to public service and to meaningful learning in the community" (p. 12).

At first glance, one might conclude that such warnings have indeed been taken to heart and that, at least in this regard, the future of service-learning is being reasonably well attended to. Institutionalization of service-learning programs has been a primary concern of Campus Compact ever since its founding, and over the past few years that concern has focused ever more specifically on the integration of service into the curriculum. The Principles of Good Practice, referred to above, are invoked and distributed at almost every service-learning conference and institute, thus reminding participants of the need to effect a greater balance of power between academic and community partners. Far from being ignored, reflection now seems to command widespread understanding and respect. Indeed, debate about the conceptual frame most appropriate for processing service experiences can become so serious, it can even result in significant splits within programs.[2]

Such a sense of "progress" may, however, be misleading—even dangerously so. Institutionalization and efforts to develop "ownership and leadership...within the ranks of respected faculty" (Kendall, p. 12) have remained largely sporadic and uncoordinated. Lip service is paid to developing greater equality in academy-community partnerships—but little serious attention has been given to defining more precisely community responsibilities or to identifying the kinds of agencies actually capable of supporting effective service-learning collaborations.[3] Relatedly, reflection too often amounts to little more than student

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2. At one institution I visited, for example, a group of faculty had balked at supporting the school's efforts to strengthen and expand its service-learning program on the grounds that the kind of reflection envisioned did not necessarily include radical social criticism.

3. There is, indeed, a widespread tendency in the service-learning community to "romanticize" the role of community agencies, to assume that it is the academic side that is to blame whenever efforts at

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"discovery" of a pre-determined, ideologically "correct" interpretation of the service experience. Minimal interest is shown in making that reflection a multi-dimensional educational exercise rooted in the traditions and objectives of a specific discipline. In other words, contemporary responses to Kendall's challenge can often best be characterized as well intended.

And yet, there exists—within Kendall's own text—the key to a more satisfactory response. Toward the end of her discussion of the "lessons" the service-learning movement neglects at its peril, Kendall appends a sub-section entitled "Other Contributing Trends." Here she identifies two further considerations—circumstances that make the present "a critical point in history and a time of great opportunity for efforts to combine service and learning" (p. 13). The first of these is the general effort to promote curriculum reform on the undergraduate level; the second, the increasing legitimacy of experience-based education.

With regard to curriculum reform, Kendall approvingly quotes Tim Stanton who wrote as early as 1987:

> When effectively structured, facilitated, related to discipline-based theories and knowledge, and assessed...service-based learning is the means to link the initiative to develop [students'] social responsibility with...the efforts to improve undergraduate education. (p. 14)

Thus, in a sense, we come back to the point where we began; i.e., with Boyer's call—not for service-learning—but for a "New American College": "an institution that celebrates teaching and selectively supports research, while also taking special pride in its capacity to connect thought to action, theory to practice."[4] In other words, we come back to the priority of *educational* vision, *educational* innovation, *educational* reform.

It is the contention of this essay that unless Kendall's "lessons," the lessons learned from service-learning's last "exciting, but short-lived wave" (Kendall 11), are deepened and extended in a *rigorously academic* way, unless Stanton's observations regarding "discipline-based theories and knowledge" are taken quite literally, the present upsurge of interest in community-based learning will last no longer than did its late-60s, early-70s predecessor. In fact, successful exploitation of the present window of opportunity may well depend upon a single elusive but nonetheless basic decision—whether the movement as a whole prioritizes

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community-academy collaboration fail. Such an attitude, however, is not only one-sided, it is also patronizing.

4. Note how in this key definition the word *service* does not even appear.

ideological or academic issues. I myself firmly believe in the necessary primacy of the latter. In the following sections, I will attempt to explain what this implies.

Intellectual Resource Allocation

In his keynote address at the January 1995 Colloquium on National and Community Service, Tom Ehrlich made an important distinction:

> Community service in the context of academic courses and seminars—often termed "service-learning"—is valuable for two fundamental and interrelated reasons: (1) Service as a form of *practical experience enhances learning* in all areas of a university's curriculum; and (2) the experience of community service *reinforces moral and civic values* inherent in serving others [original emphases].

Ehrlich's clear and explicit recognition of the two "interrelated" but nonetheless different rationales that support service-learning may not be conceptually new, but helps make an important point.[5] Up until recently, the service-learning movement has more often seen "moral and civic values" as the horse pulling the cart of "enhanced learning" rather than vice versa. As a result, the movement has remained far less visible—and attractive—to the higher education community than is necessary for its own survival. As long as service-learning is described and recommended primarily—let alone exclusively—in terms of moral and/or civic lessons and benefits, the vast majority of academicians will do what many typically do now: agree that moral and civic growth is indeed important, recognize its place in the undergraduate (and graduate) experience—*and deny that such concerns have anything to do with their own professional responsibilities*.[6]

Ehrlich himself implicitly recognizes this problem when, in his address, he focuses on the humanities:

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5. The same basic distinction is made by Donald Harward (October/November 1994) in his "Directions of Learning," *Compact Current*, Vol 8, Issue 5. Harward's observation that service also reflects "epistomological" themes is especially suggestive.

6. Rick Battistoni tells of once having received a note from a chair congratulating him on his service-learning initiatives—but denying they had any relevance to the professor's own discipline—practical philosophy! Surely it is not coincidental that service-learning has found its greatest resonance in disciplines such as sociology and political science where even traditional academicians can quickly recognize familiar issues and "legitimate" concerns.

Linking the humanities to service presents a special challenge because the humanities palette is the widest and most diffuse. The proposition that service enriches learning in all areas of the university finds its test case in literature. How can one "experience" *Middlemarch* as well as read it?

Literature—or at least certain kinds of literature—may indeed be a "test case"—but so are medieval history, astrophysics, differential calculus, bond markets, and hydraulic engineering. In fact, there may be no single discipline— including social work and applied ethics—that can not and will not be seen by some of its practitioners as a "test case" of service-learning's academic relevance.

Nor should we be surprised that so many faculty members have adopted a posture of general approval but personal indifference. Even individuals committed to service-learning frequently concede the lack of *intellectual* depth and *academic* detail in many service-learning forums and documents. Conference sessions may promise serviceable models but participants come away more with a sense of the presenter's dedication and enthusiasm than with any enhanced understanding of how traditional academic content has been enriched. Programs set out to collect sample service-learning syllabi—only to learn that even some of the best practitioners "don't put much on paper"! When one adds to these difficulties the fact that the very language of service-learning can seem foreign to those not trained in the social sciences, it is not difficult to understand why personal <u>pre</u>-disposition often seems more important than educational value in securing faculty participation!

The degree to which this situation prevails; i.e., the degree to which the service-learning movement seems more adept at "preaching to the choir" than to "making new converts," may not at first be apparent. Take, for example, the very text of Ehrlich's address as adapted for publication in the *AAHE Bulletin* (March 1995). If I am a professor of English literature who has by chance stumbled upon this text, I may well find myself sympathetically engaged *and* intellectually intrigued by many of its general points. Then I come to the "test case in literature"—and I am even more intrigued, recognizing a question that had slowly begun taking shape in my own mind: Granted such a linking of learning and service has much to recommend it, how indeed would *I*—as a professor of English literature—give such a pedagogy a try? But instead of a response to the *discipline-specific* question that has taken shape in my mind—i.e., incorporating service-learning into a course on *Middlemarch*, or George Eliot, or the Victorian novel—what I find...is the example of a course entitled "Altruism, Philanthropy, and Public Service"! Granted, the course makes extensive use of literary texts to promote discussion; it is nonetheless not a literature course, and for me, there is all the difference in the world between teaching literature and using literature to teach something else.[7]

Such an instance of potential "disappointment" is by no means rare.[8] Nor does it result from any deficiencies inherent in service-learning as a pedagogy. Instead, it suggests that we have yet to concentrate sufficiently on the academic side of our work. Given the fact that most service-learning advocates are moved by and responding to something larger than discipline-specific expectations, this delay is not surprising. Nonetheless, it has helped reinforce some serious doubts about what the movement stands for and what it has to offer.[9]

Even Kendall's introduction is not free from problems of this kind. In identifying the work of the present "critical juncture," she offers the following list of questions to be addressed:

> How do you involve the residents of a community in defining the service tasks? How do you balance and respect the differing goals of agencies, students, schools, and the individuals or groups whom these three have decided to "serve"? How do you gain the institutional support required for a strong, continuing program? How can schools and colleges assess what students learn through community and public service? What types of public and institutional policies create a climate of sustained support for combining service and learning? (p. 12)

She then goes on to stress the crucial importance of faculty "ownership and leadership," to which she previously referred. But where exactly in the above list of key questions is it that faculty are represented? Where do we find its interests—*as faculty*—directly acknowledged and addressed? True, any experienced service-learning educator could immediately begin drawing those interests from items in the list. But that is precisely the point: very often it takes a prior commitment to the academic relevance of service-learning to see that relevance. The appeal is self-referential.

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7. That literary texts do indeed lend themselves well to raising and exploring precisely the kinds of fundamental moral and social questions in which service-learning proponents are interested the example of Robert Coles has provided ample testimony. See especially chapter five, "Doing and Learning," in his *The Call of Service* (1993).

8. I myself have personally encountered such situations many times—even with colleagues already personally committed to service-learning. One colleague recently told me she has stopped attending service-learning conferences because she is tired of hearing the same things repeated every time.

9. Nowhere is this more true than with regard to terminology. Given the fact that one of the most serious misconceptions service-learning advocates have to deal with is the academic public's tendency to conflate service-learning with community service, it is remarkable how effortlessly most have adopted the hybrid "community service learning." And as if such confusion were not bad enough, many also continue to use the verb "volunteer"—a self-defeating move if there ever was one!

If such an analysis is at all correct, clearly some kind of "mid-course correction" is in order. Without abandoning the ideological concerns—moral and civic—fundamental to the very concept of service-learning, far more explicit attention must now be paid not just to the concept's general educational side—the kinds of learning that reflection can draw from experience—but to its specifically academic side—the specific ways in which community involvement and community-based projects enhance the discipline-specific learning academicians see as central to their professional activities. In other words, the time has come for Stanton's vision of "service-based learning [as] the means to link the initiative to develop [students'] social responsibility...with the efforts to improve undergraduate education" (Kendall, p. 14) to move from being merely "another contributing factor" to becoming the central task at hand.[10]

Fortunately, there are signs that this is, in fact, beginning to happen. In December of 1993, a second pivotal service-learning conference took place at Johnson and Johnson's Wingspread facility in Racine, Wisconsin: a planning meeting for the country's first faculty-based service-learning association. Since then, the "Invisible College," as this association has come to be called, has grown to over 60 members—a nationwide core of educators "who envision and model teaching linked to service and create sustained support for those who share this

vision" (Mission Statement).[11]

Under the auspices of both the College and Campus Compact, the service-learning movement's first "national [faculty] gathering" took place this May at Providence College in Rhode Island. Relatedly, the two organizations have also agreed to sponsor, together with the American Association of Higher Education, a monograph series on service-learning and the major academic disciplines/interdisciplinary areas. Each volume is to be edited by faculty in the discipline/interdisciplinary area in question and is to contain essays and models of special relevance to those working specifically in that discipline/area. It is hoped

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10. In other words, there are three—not two—kinds of legitimacy we must attend to. In addition to moral/civic and community legitimacy, there is also academic legitimacy. And while it is clear these three do not exist in any neat, linear or hierarchical relationship, it is also clear that without a strong base of academic legitimacy, neither moral/civic nor community legitimacy can be long sustained, or developed to the point of real effectiveness. However, such a base can hardly be created if the academic (institution-focused) dimension is simply folded into the moral/civic, as if it were a secondary consideration.

11. For more information about the Invisible College, one can contact its Campus Compact liaison, Sandra Enos, at Campus Compact in Providence, R.I.

that these monographs will promote a higher level of academic discourse throughout the service-learning movement.[12]

However, even major initiatives such as these represent merely a fraction of what needs to be done if service-learning is to survive and prosper as a significant player in American higher education. As momentum builds within the individual disciplines, service-learning initiatives must win increasing legitimacy within both disciplinary associations and individual departments.[13] For only in this way will service-learning practitioners find access to institutional reward structures—and without such access, the movement can never be more than a fringe phenomenon.

Thus, a twofold strategy suggests itself. First, a concerted effort must be launched to make service-learning a respected voice in those venues where discipline-related agendas are set and discipline-related issues are discussed. This imperative, in turn, implies both "political" and intellectual initiatives. It implies not only getting service-learning presentations and panels on national and regional conference agendas but also making sure those presentations and panels demonstrate real rigor and sophistication of thought.[14] Similarly, service-learning educators need to begin writing not just for publications targeted at a service-learning audience but also for professional journals in their field. An excellent example of such work in the area of composition and communication is Bruce Herzberg's article "Community Service and Critical Thinking," which appeared in the October 1994 edition of *College Composition and Communication*.

But publications and presentations in and of themselves will not be enough to win disciplinary converts as well as disciplinary legitimacy unless considerably more attention is paid to the discipline-specific dimensions of service-learning issues and activities. If, as was noted above (p. 10), it is not uncommon to discover, even among experienced service-learning practitioners, a surprising lack

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12. As general editor of the monograph series, I would be happy to provide additional information on this project to anyone requesting it. I can be reached via the Bentley Service-Learning Project, Bentley College, Waltham, MA 02154. E-mail messages can be sent to mbliss@bentley.edu.

13. It would be hard to overestimate the importance of this point. Many educational thinkers have stressed the pivotal role played by discipline-based groupings. In the May/June 1995 issue of *Change*, for example, Donald Kennedy, former president of Stanford, describes departments as "the units in which the institution's strategy for academic development is formulated in practice," (p. 12).

14. The significance of this second consideration has taken on new urgency now that several national associations—e.g., the American Sociological Association, The Speech Communication Association, and The Academy of Management—have demonstrated a willingness to include service-learning in their conference agendas. In such forums, panel discussions and presentations that are long on personal testimonials but short on intellectual and/or pedagogical substance will probably wind up doing more harm than good.

of documentation with regard to service-learning assignments, it is even less common to discover anything resembling developed discipline-specific thinking. Reflection is reflection is reflection.

But is it? Are the elements that make for an academically successful service-learning experience as generic as most of the literature and the discussion would lead one to believe? Almost everyone in service-learning has heard of David Kolb's experiential learning cycle (1984); many regularly invoke it. But Kolb's cycle is not without important disciplinary implications, and these one finds referred to far less often. However, unless we do begin to take them seriously—and develop our strategies with them in mind—it is questionable whether we will succeed in making service-learning legitimate outside of those disciplines that have already demonstrated a "natural fit."

A second set of strategic initiatives needs to focus on the various efforts already underway to redefine traditional concepts of faculty responsibility, productivity, and excellence. For while service-learning can indeed be accommodated and legitimized within prevailing academic norms; e.g., as contributing to effective and innovative teaching, as providing opportunities for pedagogical as well as field-based research, there can be no doubt that these norms have become extremely—and unnecessarily—narrow. Thus, all efforts to rethink and expand them are of critical, if indirect, importance to the service-learning movement.

Again, "political" as well as intellectual enterprise is called for. Toward the beginning of this essay, I referred to the work of educational thinkers such as Boyer, Rice, and Lynton. In each case, one finds not just a body of important ideas but also the nucleus of an "interest group." Boyer's efforts to redefine scholarship, Rice's concern with faculty roles and responsibilities, Lynton's advocacy of faculty professional outreach—all represent initiatives with broad academic resonance, and those who support these initiatives share many of the same concerns and values as do those in the service-learning movement. Thus, by reaching out to these natural allies, service-learning educators can form strategic alliances and more quickly achieve "critical mass," both in their professional associations and at their home institutions.

Indeed, the number of potential allies is quite significant. For in addition to those dealing with structural and functional issues in higher education, there are also those concerned with curricular focus and pedagogical effectiveness. All whose educational agendas include active or collaborative learning, critical thinking, portfolio assessment, diversity and multi-culturalism—to name just a few major interests—can and should be brought into active dialogue with the service-learning movement. As Battistoni has pointed out in a recent issue of *Liberal Education*, service-learning and diversity work do indeed go hand in hand. But how many of

those whose primary focus is diversity rather than service-learning are aware of this congruence?[15]

One could, in fact, argue that even service-learning's central task—designing and implementing effective curriculum-based service assignments—largely depends upon its success in exploiting the potential of such alliances. Kendall herself implicitly makes this point when she identifies, as a major "trend" working in favor of contemporary service-learning, higher education's increasing recognition of the value of experiential learning in general.

> The *methods* of experiential education are the same as those needed for the effective combination of service and learning. These methods were better refined and articulated in the 1980s, thus offering a deeper body of knowledge...There is more expertise about how to facilitate and assess the learning that is derived from experience.

In other words, the work of researchers like David Kolb (1984) and Donald Schon (1983 and 1987), though not specifically concerned with service-learning, helps nonetheless illuminate and refine service-learning by illuminating and refining the experiential learning theory it depends upon. Similarly, an active collaboration between those working in service-learning and those working in diversity could result in far more effective and sophisticated approaches to student preparation for and reflection on service experiences.[16] Or, to take still another example, the task of documenting and assessing faculty involvement in service-learning could—and should—draw directly on Lynton and Elman's research on "Evaluating and Rewarding New professional Activities" (1987).[17]

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15. Another recent article that makes an important contribution to linking service-learning with a potential ally is Deborah Hirsch and Ernest Lynton's "Bridging Two Worlds," *NSEE Quarterly*, Vol. 20, Nr. 4 (1995). Hirsch and Lynton explore the relationship between service-learning and what they call "professional [faculty] service." For a thorough discussion of the latter, see Lynton's *Making the Case for Professional Service* (1995).

16. My home institution, Bentley College, provides a good case study of the task at hand. For several years now, Bentley has actively promoted the value both of service-learning and of diversity. However, it was not until the past year that those working in each area came to see clearly their common interests and to appreciate the potential of each other's resources. For service-learning advocates, this meant not only expert help in planning and leading student preparation and reflection sessions but also untapped course connections. For diversity leaders, service-learning provided new opportunities for diversity training as well as access to a wider range of role models.

17. Still another important reason why service-learning advocates need to begin striking strategic alliances is suggested by the most recent issue of *Change* (May/June 1995). As AAHE's Ted Marchese points out in his introduction to the issue's three featured articles, "...the problem [in higher education] is

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Conclusion: Service-Learning and Academic Culture

With some justification, one could reduce—and oversimplify—the thesis of this essay to the proposition that service-learning educators must soon decide whether they are first and foremost a movement of academically based community advocates or first and foremost a movement of socially and pedagogically concerned academicians. What should take priority in our discussions and writings: a probing of the suitability of concepts such as "charity,""citizenship," and "justice" or a probing of the rationales that will allow engineers and chemists as well as sociologists and political scientists to see service-learning as directly relevant to their work? Do we expand the service-learning circle by insisting that community members be actively invited into all forums—or by insisting that academicians from all areas of higher education be included.

Naturally, the immediate impulse is to say BOTH! Indeed, I myself would maintain that until we can fully develop both our academic and our community relationships, and learn to include both groups as effectively as possible, our work will not realize its full potential and must remain perforce incomplete. But such a desire for wholeness should not be allowed to obscure the fact that resources are, in fact, limited; priorities must be set, and strategies established if the movement is to continue to thrive.

For example, if we wish to extend the circle of academicians willing to participate, we must skillfully manage the dialogue of invitation: if participation in service-learning is seen as requiring too much additional responsibility and too much sacrifice of traditional control, the number of those willing to experiment with this pedagogy will grow very slowly indeed. Community organizations may or may not welcome an opportunity to collaborate on a syllabus, but such collaboration should not be made a criterion of faculty participation. Potential practitioners need to understand that personal circumstances and institutional/ departmental expectations can and should be taken into account.

In short, we must make every effort to rid ourselves of a "hoops" mentality—a sometimes palpable if also only implied demand that unless certain

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the system [itself] and what seems called for is systemic change...[but] the term 'systemic change' fails to tell us *what* the content of that change should be" (p. 4). Unless service-learning advocates become a part of the larger dialogue trying to specify the content of "that change," we could well find ourselves on the outside of whatever does develop. For example, in the first of the three featured articles that follow, Donald Kennedy speaks of his belief that higher education is, in fact, in the midst of a revolution comparable to the one that introduced graduate education over 100 years ago. And yet, despite Kennedy's impeccable credentials as a supporter of campus-based service, community outreach never once appears in his discussion of needed change.

conditions of attitude or action are met, what is happening is not "real" service-learning.[18] To be sure, everything anyone chooses to call "service-learning" should not be automatically sanctioned and supported. Guidelines and principles of good practice have not lost their relevance, and service-learning advocates have a serious obligation to see that programs and projects do not wind up "doing more harm than good." Nonetheless, we must ourselves be willing to take risks, to stretch and learn from experience. For just as every discipline brings to service-learning its own set of assumptions and expectations, so each faculty member enters the process with different skills and different needs. Attending to these takes time, but such attention is essential to building a strong, self-sustaining movement.

Nor should such a stance be misconstrued as a "selling out" of the service-learning vision—as a pursuit of academic acceptance at any price. If at present service-learning runs any danger of co-optation, that danger stems, not from too great a willingness to accept ideologically questionable attitudes and practices, but from the transformation of service-learning into still another academic specialty. As was mentioned above (p. 9), most academicians are all too ready to grant that the kinds of personal and civic development that service-learning facilitates are important—but not part of their professional responsibility. Hence, any strategy that—through the barriers it raises to widespread faculty participation—inadvertently confirms such thinking may do more to reinforce than to transform the status quo.

For, indeed, what is at stake—what must be at stake—if service-learning is to have a future, is nothing less than a transformation of contemporary academic culture: the transformation of a set of elitist, self-referential academic assumptions into what the American Association of Higher Education's 1995 national conference characterized as "the engaged campus." Such a campus implies far more than community-based learning in the name of justice or citizenship education. It implies more even than a rethinking of faculty roles and rewards, or acceptance of a broader definition of scholarship and a more diversified, representative curriculum. At bottom, it implies nothing less than a reintegration of higher education into the overall educational continuum—and a refocusing of that continuum on the needs of today's students, in today's economy, in today's society.[19]

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18. Several years ago when I was participating in a Campus Compact Summer Institute as part of a Bentley team, I became aware that the team across the hall was having a very difficult time developing an action plan to take back to its home institution. Their "block" was not resolved until they discovered that not all service-learning courses needed to follow the fully developed model they'd been introduced to. It was all right to start with something that could be gradually developed over time.

19. For a similar understanding, approached from a different set of concerns, see Nicholas Bromell's "What Next? Thought and Action in Intellectual Work," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 47, Nr. 1 (1995).

Or, to put the matter somewhat differently and more provocatively: at what level do those of us in service-learning begin taking concepts such as community and democracy seriously? Is the focus of our efforts at "democratic" empowerment primarily or even exclusively in those communities of which we are not full members? Over the past few years, I have certainly encountered more than a few well designed, much acclaimed service-learning programs that implicitly practice the very "missionary" mentality they ideologically denounce. "Community" means "minority community"—and it is always "out there." Hence, it perforce excludes both the white working-class "townies" living literally in the shadow of the institution as well as the often isolated and alienated minorities living right on campus. Least of all does it include a long-term strategy to engage and transform the college or university itself—on its own terms; i.e., not as an outpost for alienated community organizers or social activists but as an institution charged first and foremost with a broad spectrum of complex educational responsibilities.[20]

In his book *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (1990), Peter Senge identifies as fundamental to every organization's success the ability to establish and sustain what he calls "creative tension"—the propulsive power inherent in adhering simultaneously to a guiding vision *and* to an accurate assessment of current reality (p. 150). The same, I believe, can be said of the service-learning movement. Unless we learn soon to respond in a much more differentiated and adequate way to the realities of our institutional and professional contexts, our commitment to social ideals will not generate long-term progress. And without such progress, it is a question if we can—or even should—survive.

I should also add that *within* higher education itself, there is a pressing need to re-establish the educational continuum. For example, the service-learning movement as a whole has far more to learn from community colleges than many 4-year institutions have yet realized. Programs like Brevard's in Florida and Mesa's in Arizona are rich in interesting models and innovative ideas.

20. Which, of course, does NOT mean that there is no legitimate place on our campuses or in our faculties for such organizers and activists—only that their role must always remain, by their own choice, limited.

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