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From the Editor: Special Conference Issue Is Indicative of Growth in Engagement Scholarship Throughout the World

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Special Conference Issue Is Indicative of Growth in Engagement Scholarship Throughout the World

As editor of *JCES*, it is indeed with pride, enthusiasm, and anticipation that this special conference issue is provided at the 2013 Engagement Scholarship Consortium (ESC) meeting, an evolutionary outcome of the group that annually presented what has been known as the National Outreach Scholarship Conference (NOSC). This issue of *JCES*, as well as the shift from NOSC to ESC, is indicative of the dynamic growth in engagement scholarship. There is a surreal feeling, knowing that this issue of *JCES* is a special NOSC 2012 (the last conference under that name) put together specifically for circulation at the first conference under the auspices of ESC. Representing some of the best engagement scholarship there is today, the diversity of manuscripts, topics, and authors in this issue are as varied as was attendance at NOSC 2012.



Held at The University of Alabama, the first non-land-grant university to host the conference, there were 613 persons from 39 states, Canada, Nigeria, and Egypt in attendance. Eighty-four colleges and universities and 47 community agencies were represented with community partners from 14 different states. I am especially impressed with the emphasis this conference placed on community partners, involving them in all aspects of the conference development and having a community partners' track. One of my personal highlights of the conference was to see a room full of community partners in attendance at a workshop designed specifically for community partners to provide them with concrete suggestions on how to negotiate fuller participation across the spectrum in community-academic partnerships. As one attendee stated, "Thank you so much for

this. Attending this session has made my trip here from Chicago worthwhile."

As in every issue of *JCES*, this issue reflects the voices of community partners, academic institutions of higher education, and students. In our community and student pieces, written by Felecia Jones and Kirstin Barnes respectively, the authors share their individual viewpoints and experiences of NOSC 2012. We especially want to highlight a piece written by whom we believe just might be the youngest presenters ever at an academic conference. These students' proposal went through the regular peer review process for the conference and their abstract was accepted. In a standing room only crowd, these now fifth grade students presented as if they were seasoned professionals, receiving a standing ovation. Based on their presentation, we invited them to write one of the Student Voices pieces for this issue. So, I invite you to read these phenomenal students' submission, entitled, "Learning Professional Journalism with Help from University Faculty and Students." We congratulate the authors, Mr. Joshua Patton and Sean Smith and their teacher, Miss Latrina Spencer. To gain a more thorough understanding of their project, read Dr. George L. Daniels' manuscript entitled, "A Five-Step Model for 'Unconventional Engagement'."

Also related to NOSC 2012, I encourage you to read the summaries of the conference's outstanding plenary speakers. Ranging from a U.S. Ambassador, to university presidents and professors, these speakers provide us with insight, encouragement, reflections, and wisdom on community engagement and engagement scholarship from their years of experience in the field. Summaries of the Magrath Award competitors, whose work represents the best of university-community partnerships, provide examples of the ways

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in which community engagement can transform the world. Also included are the abstracts of poster winners at NOSC 2012.

The remaining manuscripts in this issue include reports on engagement research and scholarship that address culturally relevant health promotion in Guatemala, the power of story-telling to build partnerships in a Latino community, the shifting of attitudes towards poverty through service-learning, and the development of classroom exercises and discussion prompts that provide practice strategies for coping with unfamiliar experiences in distant locales. Other manuscripts provide an outline that can assist in sustaining university-community partnerships across multiple disciplines, which promote social justice and a pedagogical tool for educating students about social justice, civic engagement, and personal responsibility for positive social change through the use of garden-based service-learning. Of course, we also include our book reviews, provided by some of the top engaged scholars in the field. Last, I would like to draw your attention to the manuscript entitled, “Catalyst for Democracy? Outcomes and Processes in Community-University Interaction,” by Dr. Tami L. Moore. As one reviewer put it, this manuscript, “boldly steps into a void created by clichéd, non-academic university tendencies to focus narrowly on their economic contributions to stakeholders. This research attempts to reset the agenda and to place the discussion back into

the real{ity} of the university’s obligation to foster democracy and the knowledge necessary to understand it.”

As always, I welcome your feedback regarding *JCES*. We need to hear what we do well and upon what we need to improve. This work could not be done without the hard work of our editorial review board and reviewers. Their work is very much appreciated and the engagement scholarship world is the better for their service. In an effort to reward our reviewers (and in all honesty to also encourage the most thorough and timely reviews), *JCES* is proud to announce that it will annually select a reviewer of the year. Making the decision of who would be our first Reviewer of the Year was difficult as we are fortunate to have some wonderful reviewers. Yet, we have selected that person and I hope you will all join me in congratulating Dr. Nick Sanyal, *JCES* board member and associate professor at the University of Idaho. You will be learning more about Nick as he has also graciously accepted our invitation to be the first associate editor of *JCES*. You’ll hear more about all of that in the next issue of *JCES* and on our website (www.jces.ua.edu). For now, we encourage you to continue to Partner! Inspire! And Change! as we all (to borrow from the ESC 2013 meeting theme in Lubbock, Texas at Texas Tech University) engage in “Boundary Spanning” to work “Across Disciplines, Communities, and Geography.”