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From the Editor: JCES Keeps its Commitment to Accessibility, in Hard Copy and Now Online

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JCES Keeps its Commitment to Accessibility, in hard copy and now online



As *JCES* begins its fifth year of publication, it seems appropriate to be somewhat reflective. We are steadily moving forward in having *JCES* meet our goal of being a premiere engagement scholarship journal, guided by our own brand of “authentic community engagement.” By this, we mean a journal that recognizes the centrality and importance of all persons involved in finding solutions to the problems addressed by engagement scholarship work. Beginning with the first issue, we committed to creating a “new kind of journal” – one responsive to the needs of communities and community partners and university constituent groups (i.e., faculty, staff, and students). *JCES* not only provides a venue for a variety of scholarly works from diverse perspectives, but is also structured around a work ethic directed toward diligently making sure the journal is accessible to all. This idea of accessibility has resulted in *JCES* being made available

electronically. To access the electronic version of the journal, including all back issues, please go to www.jces.ua.edu. Despite the financial costs and the numerous online journals that have come about in recent years, there is still something to be said for the value of hard copy journals. This recognition, along with your ongoing support of *JCES*, has resulted in University of Alabama administrators, especially Vice President for Community Affairs, Samory Pruitt, making possible our ability to continue to make *JCES* available in hard copy. In addition to accessibility in the literal sense, *JCES* also gives a great deal of attention to literacy accessibility, ensuring that a wide range of individuals can read and most importantly, understand what is written. Before the release of its inaugural issue, this focus on literacy balance and the efforts made to embrace “authentic community engagement” led to some initial criticisms and concerns regarding the scholarly value of *JCES*. After all, how could a top peer reviewed research journal be written to and for the academic and other university personnel, community, and students, while maintaining rigor and quality? Understanding that we are all students, educators, researchers, and community in the varied contexts of our lives made that part easy for us.

It has taken a great deal of work from a dedicated group of individuals, but the feedback from those of you in the community engagement and scholarship field indicate that we have been successful in having *JCES* be a new and different kind of research journal, while maintaining scholarly rigor. We appreciate your support and are committed to retaining the high standards you have come to expect from *JCES*. As we work to strengthen community partner and student participation in the journal, we look to you all to encourage your community partners and students to submit a piece for review and possible publication in an upcoming issue of *JCES*. We make every effort to include a least one community partner and one student piece in each issue. These manuscripts need to be reflective essays or critiques on some aspect of community engagement and scholarship or their experiences with community engagement work. These pieces are 500–1000 word essays provided to give voice to these populations who are still too often spoken for as if they had no voice of their own, even in the engagement scholarship field, where they are typically given more voice than in traditional research. We know that you are as anxious as are we to hear more from our students and community partners and we look forward to hearing from many of them with whom you work.

As with each issue of *JCES*, we hope you find the included manuscripts informative, engaging, and relevant to your work in engagement scholarship. The articles in this volume are as varied as are the disciplines to which engagement scholarship applies. From addressing how to best improve health outcomes for the Latino population in a rural Southeastern community to understanding the application of critical race feminism as a framework for engagement scholarship, this issue provides stimulating and pointed suggestions for improving the communities in which we live. *JCES* continues to identify ways in which to highlight the role of engagement scholarship in the academic environment as seen with one manuscript that addresses how to develop more effective and sustainable relationships between communities and universities. Other manuscripts address topics that include ways to improve the society in which we live, whether through college instruction of a policy course or revitalization of a community post-disaster. As we prepare the next edition of *JCES*, which will be published shortly prior to our hosting of the National Outreach and Scholarship Conference, September 30–October 3, 2012, we are excited about the opportunity to showcase *JCES* and all else The University of Alabama has to offer. We invite you to attend the conference and learn even more about how to integrate the conference theme—Partner. Inspire. Change.—into your engagement scholarship work.