

August 2015

Book review: University Engagement for Community Economic Development: The Role of Anchor Institutions

Glenn A. Bowen
Barry University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.northgeorgia.edu/jces>

Recommended Citation

Bowen, Glenn A. (2015) "Book review: University Engagement for Community Economic Development: The Role of Anchor Institutions," *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship*: Vol. 8 : Iss. 2 , Article 17.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.northgeorgia.edu/jces/vol8/iss2/17>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by Nighthawks Open Institutional Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship by an authorized editor of Nighthawks Open Institutional Repository.

University Engagement for Community Economic Development: The Role of Anchor Institutions

**Review by Glenn A. Bowen
Barry University**

Rita Axelroth Hodges and Steve Dubb, *The Road Half Traveled: University Engagement at a Crossroads*. Michigan State University Press, East Lansing, MI., 2012, 238 pages. ISBN: 978-1-66186-046-7. Paperback.

The economic development role of higher education institutions has come into sharp focus in recent years. This was prompted in part by the recommitment of state and land-grant institutions to engagement that is responsive to the social and economic needs of surrounding communities (Kellogg Commission on the Future of the State and Land-Grant Universities, 1999). Boyer's (1996) clarion call for institutions to participate more vigorously in partnerships that address economic and other pressing problems also provided impetus for community engagement.

In general, colleges and universities—public and private alike—may provide economic development support through employment, purchasing, and resource sharing; human capital development; and knowledge transfer (Wittman & Crews, 2012). In particular, many institutions have contributed to community economic development through service learning, the pedagogy that integrates community service into the curriculum (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Steinberg, Kenworthy-U'Ren, Desplaces, Coleman, & Golden, 2006).

The Road Half Traveled: University Engagement at a Crossroads assesses economic development initiatives and partnership programs of colleges and universities as anchor institutions in low-income, urban communities. Coauthored by Rita Axelroth Hodges (University of Pennsylvania) and Steve Dubb (University of Maryland, College Park), the book situates community economic development in the broad context of community engagement and clarifies the concept of anchor institutions. The book draws attention to effective practices among colleges and universities that convene stakeholders, facilitate programs, and lead initiatives designed to improve the economic and social welfare of the communities in which the institutions are anchored.

The Road Half Traveled is divided into four parts consisting of 11 chapters complemented by

three appendices. A set of case studies form the core of the book. The cases feature 10 institutions that have pursued an anchor institution mission—“*the conscious and strategic application of the long-term, place-based economic power of the institution, in combination with its human and intellectual resources, to better the welfare of the community in which it resides*” (p. 147, italics in original). The featured institutions reflect diversity; they include public and private, four-year and two-year, research and liberal arts, Ivy League and land-grant.

Part 1, “The Past and Present of University Engagement,” encompasses four chapters. In the opening chapter, Hodges and Dubb trace significant developments in university-community engagement such as the establishment of land-grant colleges, cooperative extension, the settlement house movement, and service-learning programs. In Chapter 2, the authors outline three roles of anchor institutions: facilitator, leader, and convenor. Explicated in Chapter 3 are six major areas in which urban colleges and universities have worked with communities: comprehensive neighborhood revitalization; community economic development through corporate investment; local capacity building; public school and health partnerships; academic engagement; and multi-anchor, city, and regional partnerships. The authors then discuss, in Chapter 4, some of the challenges that institutions face in their engagement efforts. These include securing funding and leveraging resources, building a culture of economic inclusion, and sustaining participatory planning and robust community relationships.

Three comprehensive case studies comprise Part 2. The first, in Chapter 5, examines the facilitator strategy as exemplified at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), Portland State University, and Miami Dade College. The second, in Chapter 6, profiles the University of Pennsylvania (Penn), the University of Cincin-

nati, and Yale University employing the leadership strategy. The final case study, in Chapter 7, illustrates the convener strategy at Syracuse University, the University of Minnesota Twin Cities, LeMoyne-Owen College, and Emory University.

The single chapter in Part 3 identifies “best practices” in relation to the major areas of engagement (described in Chapter 3), together with an outline of associated strategies and their key features. Salient practices include IUPUI’s alignment of academic resources with community development goals; Penn’s multipronged neighborhood revitalization, which draws on academic, “corporate,” and human resources; and LeMoyne-Owen’s establishment of a community development corporation. An additional example is Miami Dade College’s “Opportunity for All” strategy aimed at building a culture of economic inclusion, which involves reaching underserved populations through an open-door policy, job training, small-business development, and employment. Two of the key features of this strategy are workforce training of low-income residents for available jobs and micro-entrepreneurship training in a minority business corridor.

Part 4, “Envisioning the Road to be Taken: Realizing the Anchor Institution Mission,” offers readers clear-cut information on how to build internal constituencies for partnership work (Chapter 9), catalyze change through philanthropy (Chapter 10), and provide policy support for the anchor institution mission (Chapter 11). In a concluding section, the authors provide a table—the last of the book’s 32 tables, all labeled less precisely as figures—outlining specific recommendations for fulfilling the anchor institution mission.

The full title of the book gives a mixed signal. While the main title implies a half-accomplished goal (on a single “road” to be traveled), the subtitle suggests that there are different directions in which to go. At the same time, it is relevant to note that for many (perhaps most) institutions, the “road” has not been taken at all. As Charles Rutheiser points out in the book’s foreword, a relatively small number of universities have adopted an anchor institution mission.

It seems that the “road” is “half traveled” because the current travelers (anchor institutions) have not fully realized their anchor mission. Colleges and universities that play the role of facilitator have exhibited a high degree of collaboration with community groups but have made only small institutional investments in community development.

While the “leaders” have made large corporate investments and comprehensive community development efforts, they have mostly “consulted” with communities rather than foster true partnerships. For their part, the “conveners” have relied heavily on external sources of support to implement vital capacity-building work in the community. To get to the destination, institutions must “develop internal organizing strategies that consciously engage their comprehensive resources—human, academic, cultural, and especially economic—with their communities in collaborative and sustainable ways” (p. 144).

One could fault the authors for not designing their research intentionally to yield hard, quantitative data on the community economic impact of anchor institutions. However, Hodges and Dubb anticipated such a criticism by acknowledging this shortcoming. They have, moreover, offset the criticism by presenting in-depth, comprehensive cases that demonstrate the effectiveness of certain practices among the institutions in their study.

The *Road Half Traveled* makes a substantial contribution to the community engagement literature in at least three ways. First, it unpacks the anchor institution concept by identifying related roles and pertinent practices in a community development context. Second, the book features a cross-section of anchor institutions providing engagement models that can be pressed into service. Third, it shows how colleges and universities can go about adopting anchor institution strategies for pursuing economic development goals in collaboration with community partners.

In effect, *The Road Half Traveled* helps us to understand better what an anchor institution is, what it does, and how it works. Institutional leaders, community engagement administrators, and local development planners will find this book useful as they embrace engagement designed to build and sustain the economic vitality of communities and concomitantly improve the well-being of residents.

References

- Boyer, E.L. (1996). The scholarship of engagement. *Journal of Public Service & Outreach*, 1(1), 9–20.
- Bringle, R.G., & Hatcher, J.A. (1996). Implementing service learning in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education*, 67(2), 221–239.
- Kellogg Commission on the Future of the State and Land-Grant Universities. (1999). *Returning to our roots: The engaged institution*. Washing-

ton, DC: National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges.

Steinberg, M., Kenworthy-U'Ren, A., Deplaces, D., Coleman, S., & Golden, R. (2006). A service-learning approach to community economic development: The University of Hartford micro business incubator. *International Journal of Case*

Method Research & Application, 18(2), 200–208.

Wittman, A., & Crews, T. (2012). *Engaged learning economies: Aligning civic engagement and economic development in community-campus partnerships*. Boston, MA: Campus Compact.

On Becoming Change Agents in Education through Service-Learning and Empowerment

Review by Valerie Kinloch, The Ohio State University

Vera L. Stenhouse, Olga S. Jarrett, Rhina M. Fernandes Williams, and E. Namist Chilungu, *In the Service of Learning and Empowerment: Service-Learning, Critical Pedagogy, and the Problem-Solution Project*. IAP-Information Age Publishing: Charlotte, NC, 2014, 276 pages. ISBN 978-1-62396-544-0. Paperback.

The authors of *In the Service of Learning and Empowerment: Service-Learning, Critical Pedagogy, and the Problem-Solution Project* beautifully present the results of their long-term, collaborative teaching and research project on service learning, critical pedagogy, and democratic practice. They focus their attention on the ways teacher educators, in-service teachers, and pre-service teacher education candidates can use an empowering pedagogy, referred to as the “Problem-Solution Project,” to democratically engage in teaching and learning with students, even under some of the most challenging of situations (e.g., scripted curricula, rote forms of learning, lack of teacher and student autonomy inside classrooms, the increasing top down focus on standardized testing, non-participatory learning environments, etc.). To address the importance of an empowering pedagogy, they explicitly discuss lessons learned from a required assignment for teacher education candidates in the Urban Accelerated Certification and Master’s Program (UACM) at Georgia State University. The lessons highlighted throughout this book reveal the value of recognizing the need to empower “teachers and their students who are often recipients of services but who are seldom encouraged to take action” (p. xix).

The book is organized into five parts. “Fostering Empowerment through Service-Learning, Critical Pedagogy, Constructivism and the Problem-Solution Project” is the title of Part I. It comprises one chapter that introduces readers to the historical and philosophical tenets of the work, be-

ginning with a brief discussion of the distinctions between traditional and empowering pedagogy. To begin, the authors cite critical pedagogue Ira Shor (*Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change*, 1992) who asserts: “The difference between empowering and traditional pedagogy has to do with the positive or negative feelings students can develop for the learning process” (p. 23). Shor’s sentiments can be felt throughout the first section of the book, particularly in relation to how the authors detail and describe the overall purpose of the Problem-Solution Project (PSP). That is, they insist that PSP advocates for teachers and students to be empowered inside and outside schools and for them to become involved in service initiatives that critically and intentionally promote social change and social activism. Thus, the authors focus on an empowering pedagogy and not a traditional pedagogy in relation to service learning, which allows them to make the case for why the intersection of service learning, critical pedagogy, and constructivism is significant to teaching and learning. In fact, their utilization of the definition of service learning from the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse point to their understanding of service learning as a process that both “enhances the community through the service provided” as well makes available “powerful learning consequences for the students or others participating in providing a service” (p. 4; see also see the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse). Additionally, their uptake of critical pedagogy is grounded in the need to provide opportunities for people to collective-