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Marybeth Lima

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# Civic Engagement Back and Forth: A Review of *Building the Field of Higher Education Engagement: Foundational Ideas and Future Directions*

**Reviewed by Marybeth Lima  
Louisiana State University**

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Lorilee R. Sandmann and Diann O. Jones (Eds.). (2019). *Building the Field of Higher Education Engagement: Foundational Ideas and Future Directions*. Stylus Publishing, 300 pages. ISBN: 978-1620368558

This revised and expanded edition of the 20th anniversary issue of the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* (JHEOE) is an indispensable resource for engaged scholars, a perfect discussion book for engaged scholarship groups, and an essential addition to the resource section of every university's civic engagement center.

As detailed in the book's preface and first chapter, the impetus for this work came when the JHEOE<sup>1</sup> reached its 20th year of publication. The editorial board participated in a Delphi survey (Hasson et al., 2000) to determine the 10 most important or impactful articles published over the first 20 years of the journal's history (1996–2015). The 37 editorial board members unanimously identified one article: Ernest Boyer's inaugural article for the journal, "The Scholarship of Engagement." Book editors Lorilee Sandmann and Diann Jones chose to begin the collection with this article and then added the next 10 most important or impactful articles.

After the editorial board identified the articles to be included in this volume, the articles' authors<sup>2</sup> were contacted to see if they would be willing to contribute a short essay about their original article. Authors were given latitude regarding what to include in these essays, perhaps best summed up by Dwight Giles, who wrote, "It is a rare and wonderful opportunity for an author to be invited to revisit, respond to, reframe, or recant ideas expressed in an earlier article" (p. 171). Many authors took this opportunity to look back and also to look forward.

The next 11 chapters of the volume each consist of a reprint of an original article followed by the author's or coauthors' essay in response to the article. Each chapter ends with a set of

reflection questions, also written by the author(s), that invite the reader to consider each article and retrospective/prospective in a way "intended to provoke current contemplation and evoke lively dialogue" (p. xvi). The selected articles are presented in chronological order of publication from 1996 to 2012.

Sandmann and Jones then turn an eye toward the future with a chapter entitled "Perspectives on Future Directions." In this chapter, nine "next generation voices of community engagement" (p. 229) identified by JHEOE editorial board members contributed short essays on the next 20 years of community engagement in higher education. These nine essays are then collectively discussed by Judith Ramaley, president emerita and distinguished professor of public service at Portland State University, in the last chapter of the book, titled "Higher Education Community Engagement: Past, Present, and Future."

This indispensable collection has been masterfully organized in the context of time and within a framework of nuanced reflection. Veterans and next generation scholars share a great deal of collective wisdom as they reflect "backward and forward" on myriad aspects of engaged scholarship. I also appreciated the contributors' opinions about the reflective process. For example, contributors demonstrated important traits for engaged scholars such as humility, as illustrated when Fear and Sandmann wrote, "So what did we say back then? If we had to reduce the answer to one word, it would be, 'Really?'" (p. 101). Shauna Morin, Audrey Jaeger, and KerryAnn O'Meara also remind us that reflection can be at once thoughtful and joyful: "Though there is still much work to be done, it is important to occasionally pause and take stock of all that has been accomplished thus

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<sup>1</sup> The title of the journal was originally *Journal of Public Service and Outreach*. It changed to JHEOE in 2000.

<sup>2</sup> The only exception was Ernest Boyer, who is no longer alive. The editors asked Eugene Rice, a collaborator of Boyer's, to contribute the companion essay to his article.

far in the community engagement movement. We have enjoyed this unique opportunity to reflect” (p. 135). Finally, scholars such as Marisol Morales remind us that reflection by itself is not enough: “Acknowledgements of inequality and inequity are starting to surface.... However, we cannot allow these conversations to stay at the level of reflection. We must be impelled toward action and transformation” (p. 246).

Some of the themes raised in this book, including ecological/network approaches and the role of technology in engagement, felt particularly prophetic. I write this review 6 weeks after the insurrection at our nation’s capital, which laid bare the power of misinformation and the braided tension wire of fear, anger, and White supremacy. As I watched these scenes from the privileged confines of my home while the pandemic continued to rage, I was struck by these statements by Emily Janke and Judith Ramaley respectively:

- “Across the globe, we have new, technology-assisted ways to form communities among people who will never meet in person, but who feel attachment and affiliation as new ways are discovered to organize geographically disparate individuals into unified, collective, and booming voices.” (p. 241)
- “What role will virtual communities play in the future, and what will community engagement look like when a sense of place shifts not only between one geographic area and another but also from one affinity group to another on social platforms?” (p. 256)

In summary, I have drawn from a number of the works presented in this collection in my professional capacity over the years. The fact that this text combines these works into a single volume, along with others I wasn’t aware of, and ends with “big sky thinking” lifted by next generation scholars makes it a reference that I will return to often. At the close of the introductory chapter, Sandmann, Furco, and Adams state, “For those who wish to be encouraged, inspired, and challenged, we recommend reading the pioneering and groundbreaking works in this special collection” (p. 12). These contributors are 100% correct in their statement. I commend the editors of this volume for their skillful execution of this collected work, and I highly recommend this book.

## References

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## About the Author

Marybeth Lima is the Cliff & Nancy Spanier Alumni Professor and Chair of the Department of Biological & Agricultural Engineering at Louisiana State University. She collaborates with students and community partners to design and build playgrounds that reflect the soul of the community.