SERVICE-LEARNING THROUGH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

What Community Partners and Members Gain, Lose, and Learn From Campus Collaborations

LORI GARDINIER
Service-Learning Through Community Engagement
Lori Gardinier, PhD, MSW, is director of human services and a senior research associate at the Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy at Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts. She has practiced in the area of antipoverty/social justice work in community-based settings, and as a counselor in organizations addressing intimate partner violence. In her role at Northeastern University, she is a leader in experiential education practice in both local and global settings. Her outstanding commitment to high-quality experiential education was recognized with the Northeastern Presidential Aspiration Award (2004), the Excellence in Teaching Award (2011), and the Outstanding Teaching Award (2015) at Northeastern University. She has developed partnerships with many of Boston’s non-profit organizations through her own practice and continued implementation of service-learning partnerships. Dr. Gardinier has also established project-based service-learning capacity-building programs with nonprofits in Benin, Costa Rica, India, Mexico, the United Kingdom, and Zambia. In this role, she and her students collaborate with local leaders to identify creative solutions to organizational challenges.
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To Jared, Arden, and Larkin
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Contributors

Megan Dow, MA  Master’s Candidate, Department of Public Administration, School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs, Northeastern University, Boston, Massachusetts

Sarah Faude, MSEd  PhD Candidate, Department of Sociology, Northeastern University, Boston, Massachusetts

Emily A. Mann, MSSW, PhD  Teaching Professor, Department of Human Services Program, Senior Research Associate, Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy, Northeastern University, Boston, Massachusetts

Julie Miller, MSW  Founding Service-Learning Coordinator, NUGLOBAL, The College of Professional Studies at Northeastern University, Boston; Lecturer, The School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs, Northeastern University, Boston; Research Associate, MIT AgeLab, Cambridge, Massachusetts

Rebecca Riccio, MA  Director of the Social Impact Lab; Lecturer, Department of Human Services Program and School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs, Northeastern University; Academic Advisor, Learning by Giving Foundation, Boston, Massachusetts
Preface

I have always been fascinated by the ways we structure education and how people learn. As a college student, I had several powerful experiential education opportunities. These experiences formed my development as a practitioner, my teaching philosophy, and my views of the world. These opportunities also encouraged me to see the tremendous potential of higher education as a collaborator in social change efforts. Grounded in a social justice framework, I was initially conflicted by my professional path into higher education, concerned that I was too removed from social change. Embracing a practitioner-scholar identity, I began to see the important role that faculty can play in the larger constellation of social change efforts and the diverse ways that we ourselves can engage.

For over a decade, I have been designing and facilitating service-learning courses in the United States and abroad, and have come to appreciate the complexity that comes with each side of the service-learning equation. I have been humbled by the transformational learning that some students experience while concurrently challenged by some of the complex ethical dynamics inherent in this pedagogy. This book provides a space for critical reflection in community engagement, while showcasing lessons learned and recommendations for best practice. Reflection has long been viewed as a cornerstone of service-learning, and as educators we provide structured opportunities for our students. It is equally important for faculty and administrators to engage in ongoing critical reflection. Reflection and assessment are the only ways we can advance the field and determine if we are
meeting our intended goals. Sharing our experiences through the literature is one mechanism that can be used to promote this reflection.

In 2015, the artist Banksy created an exhibition called “Dismaland” that can best be described as a dystopian theme park. The most striking image to me was a sign that read “It’s not art unless it has the potential to be a disaster.” Faculty must be comfortable with a degree of chaos and the loss of control that accompany these models of education, but most importantly we must have the trust and willingness of students who can appreciate and embrace non-conventional learning experiences. For many of our students, their academic, professional, and personal beliefs are truly integrated, thus creating an energized work environment, which is constantly pushing the envelope. Their trust and willingness to share my experimental approach have allowed me to continue to grow as an educator and have challenged me to continue to seek out innovative approaches to teaching.

Furthermore, our institutions must create an atmosphere that promotes risk taking. I am grateful to be a member of the Northeastern University community, a vanguard in experiential education. Northeastern University is home to one of the oldest cooperative education programs and has provided a space for innovation. It has truly been the perfect environment for me to work as a practitioner-scholar. The Northeastern Center of Community Service and the Center for Advancing Teaching and Learning Through Research (CATLR) have been critical partners in both my implementation and study of experiential learning. I am most grateful to be part of the Human Services Program, where our staff and faculty create an environment that fosters intellectual growth and commitment excellence that is fueled by humor and mutual support.
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Most importantly, love and thanks to my husband, Jared, and children, Arden and Larkin, for joining me in far-off places and embracing the ride.
Introduction: Why We Engage

Lori Gardinier

The university’s untenable existence as remote islands of affluence in a sea of urban despair has attracted unprecedented public scrutiny. University presidents must at least appear actively sympathetic to the plight of urban communities because public funds and foundation support are increasingly being tied to direct societal benefits.

—Cortes (2004)

Campus–community relations are central to the success of colleges and universities on a variety of fronts, including community relations and promoting safe and vibrant communities that appeal to prospective and current students. The structure of campus–community relationships is diverse, and as such, there is also some debate about the ways that campus partnerships can promote authentic and meaningful partnerships that go beyond the transactional. Service-learning, community-based research, medical or service provision, and sharing or distribution of campus resources (such as space and access to events) are some typical models for campus and community collaboration. Relationships range from the perfunctory to the profound, but what is clear is that campus–community partnerships are complex, multifaceted, and have the potential to be mutually beneficial or exploitative.
The intertwined relationship between institutions of higher education and the communities where they are housed is not entirely unique. Corporations, businesses, and hospitals also have dynamic relationships with their host communities. However, the ways that universities engage with the community are rather unique, ranging from intentional activities such as experiential learning or development to the less structured interactions that students have with local residents.

Intentional approaches such as experiential education structure pedagogical approaches defined as learning that involves participants in direct experience and focused reflection (Association of Experiential Education, n.d.). Within the scholarship of experiential education, outcomes are almost exclusively focused on outcomes for students or the mechanics and logistics of campus engagement. This book seeks to explore the entire ecology of the campus–community relationship. The authors use the term university as shorthand to describe institutions of higher learning, fully recognizing the diverse and evolving structure of postsecondary learning institutions.

In the 1900s, the notion of corporate social responsibility (CSR) began to gain traction, highlighting the interconnectedness between corporations and their surrounding communities. CSR refers to efforts by businesses to work with stakeholders in achieving improved economic, environmental, and social performance, sometimes known as the triple bottom line, or corporate citizenship or sustainability. Although corporate investment in communities can have real impacts, criticism akin to “greenwashing” (the appearance of doing good to distract from larger harmful effects in the community) abounds. A similar critique of campus–community activities in the form of experiential education is worth examining, in particular because those who participate in it generally do so because they believe that they are advancing social benefits in addition to student learning.

Harkavy and Hodges (2012) describe the opportunity for colleges and universities to act as “anchor institutions,” noting “they have the potential to be sources of stability and permanence in civic partnerships with government and the private sector to revitalize local communities” (p. 1). Simply put, the health, vitality, and culture of both the campus and the community are entangled, and impactful engagement has the potential to advance shared goals.
INTRODUCTION: WHY WE ENGAGE

However, these relationships do not always thrive and, furthermore, community engagement efforts can be little more than window dressing, papering over complex organizational dynamics that perpetuate and exploit power differentials in vulnerable communities. Tyler and Haberman (2002) suggest that partnerships are more complex than generally understood and can be categorized along the following continuum: (a) committed, (b) supportive, (c) indifferent, (d) protective, and (e) exploitive (p. 89). As well meaning as these relationships are, campus–community partnerships do not always result in the intended outcomes for the community organizations and the residents they serve.

The unique contribution that this book offers is an intensive exploration of the campus–community partnership experience through multiple perspectives and models. This insight will allow all parties (community organizations and members, university administrators, faculty, and students) to enter these partnerships conscious of potential ethical and programmatic outcomes. A second objective of this book is to provide a platform for debate around the role of institutions of higher education as community members while deconstructing the notion of civic engagement both locally and globally. Institutions of higher education play an important role in the promotion and maintenance of democracy; therefore, it is critical to question not only whether campus–community partnerships promote civic engagement among students who participate in them, but if they are structured in a democratically sound process for the collaborating community members and organizations.

The third objective of this book is to identify and analyze emerging models and trends in campus–community engagement. Through several case studies, primary research, and a robust review of the literature, this book explores cutting-edge forms of community engagement, including experiential philanthropy education, global service-learning (GSL), and place-based models. This book presents community-based learning from various angles so that the reader can explore content, pedagogy, and context related to each of the models provided.

Chapter 1 provides readers with a historical exploration of the creation of higher education and how community engagement emerged. Specifically, this chapter explores the evolution of notions of community engagement, where it came from, and how it is defined, providing a foundation for the book as case examples and models are
examine against the backdrop of the philosophical and historical origins of campus–community engagement.

Chapter 2 documents the history and development of campus–community partnerships aimed at improving educational opportunities in underresourced communities. Using four case studies in different U.S. cities, this chapter considers the implications of this form of community engagement and reflects on the unique challenges and opportunities inherent in these education-based models of campus–community engagement. Universities have much to offer as they are both the providers of education and hubs for the study of education as a profession and the role of schools as institutions within society. However, campus involvement in local education models presents its own set of challenges and considerations, which are discussed.

Chapter 3 unpacks emerging models of experiential philanthropy education in which students make grants to local nonprofit organizations, providing opportunities for students to examine the complex role that funding plays in social change. Experiential philanthropy education challenges students to consider how infusions of philanthropic capital into nonprofit organizations can help address community needs and can create opportunities for them to reflect on the relationships among grant makers who control resources, program/service deliverers who need resources to implement their work, and the individuals and communities they serve. This chapter identifies strategies for optimizing the ability of experiential philanthropy education to deepen campus–community connections by supporting local nonprofit organizations and heightening students’ understanding of the communities in which they live while minimizing their potential to underscore the power differential between the campus and the community.

Chapter 4 encourages readers to consider how notions of the global community impact campus–community engagement abroad. The author explores the history and student impact of GSL; using a case study to model a three-way cross-cultural campus–community engagement strategy, the author considers what can be gained from these experiences. The use of GSL is one with elevated risks for exploitative campus–community partnership; the author discusses both the complexity of these partnerships and strategies for minimizing unethical partnerships.
Chapter 5 provides readers with insight into the experiences of supervisors in the United States who are hosting a growing number of international service-learning students in their organizations. The growth in both international students and service-learning programs provides supervisors the opportunity to grow, socio-culturally, linguistically, and logistically, to accommodate shifting demographics of their student volunteer base. Using qualitative data the authors collected from community partners, this chapter explores the unique experiences of supervisors hosting international service learners. Categories of particular focus are supervisors’ perceptions of, and ways of grappling with, cultural and linguistic divides and issues of professional readiness with international service learners. Implications for practice for supervisors of international service learners and educators involved in service-learning with international students are also discussed.

Chapter 6 discusses emerging trends within higher education to mandate compulsory community engagement. Beginning with an exploration of historical, international, and legislative forces that have influenced compulsory models, the authors examine a contemporary case example of compulsory engagement, provide issues for consideration, and recommend topics for further research for this emerging model.

One of the purported benefits of experiential learning is the training it provides to emerging professionals. Chapter 7 provides readers with a study of the Jumpstart program and its role in the community as a professional pipeline. Jumpstart recruits and trains college students to work with preschool children in low-income neighborhoods in an effort to improve educational and social outcomes. This research examines the professional trajectory of Jumpstart Corps members to better understand the role of the Jumpstart volunteer experience on the career trajectories of its Corps members. Using three data sets and a mixed-methods approach, this research illustrates the impact that civic engagement opportunities can have in providing future educators and human service workers for low-resource communities.

Chapter 8 discusses the macro effects of the presence of universities within communities through the examination of community development models. Universities are embedded in their communities and fundamentally impact the economy, commerce, resources, infrastructure, and housing where they are located. University provision
of service-learning students can be an asset to the local community; however, it can be eclipsed by the larger shadow of rising home prices and gentrification. This complex dynamic is hard to measure and harder still to understand if there is a positive net gain for local communities where universities are located. This chapter questions the ethical aspects of how a campus contributes to social community development while concurrently altering the local economy.

Chapter 9, which concludes the book, explores both the role of the individual student and the philosophy and approach of the faculty in fostering ethics engagement. Specifically, the author explores the perceptions around economic inequity that community-engaged learners may possess and can develop through these experiences. The chapter also discusses the role of critical service-learning as a backdrop for ethical engagement, concluding with an application of professional frameworks and theory as tools for guiding and reflecting practice in community engagement with the aim of minimizing ethics violations in the community.

This book contributes to the larger community engagement literature by providing an analysis of larger issues, such as historical, policy, and ethical dimensions, while concurrently reflecting on specific models of community engagement with a global perspective. The growth of these models requires careful thought and analysis about their potential to influence the community in positive or negative ways. Relationships are at the core of social change work, as Clayton et al. (2010) state:

We tend to expect that higher quality relationships are good (a) for their own sake (e.g., are more highly valued by participants) and (b) because they result in more desirable short-term and long-term benefits; however, each of these assertions warrants empirical investigation so that practitioner-scholars can have more confidence in both the importance of and the means of promoting relationships with these qualities. And, ultimately, the extent to which the field enacts engagement in democratic ways and toward democratic ends will depend on, in part, how well we operationalize a shared commitment to relationships that are at least mutually beneficial and often transformational. (p. 19)
INTRODUCTION: WHY WE ENGAGE

Universities are uniquely situated within communities, often influencing many facets of community life, including costs and structure of housing, types of amenities and businesses, and the presence of law enforcement. These community features can have direct implications for residents. How universities structure their partnerships within communities matters for the long-term viability of these relationships and, fundamentally, to ensure that we model the democratic values we espouse.

REFERENCES


CHAPTER 1

Colleges and Universities: Structure and Role in Civil Society

Lori Gardinier

As agents of the democracy, colleges and universities will consciously prepare a next generation of involved citizens reflecting the full and immensely varied cultural and economic mix of America, by creating innumerable opportunities for them to be in college and to do the work of citizenship.

—Boyte and Hollander (1999, p. 8)

Education has long been perceived as a core American value that is essential to the proliferation of our democratic values. In a letter to James Madison, Jefferson (1787) exclaimed:

Above all things I hope the education of the common people will be attended to; convinced that on their good sense we may rely with the most security for the preservation of a due degree of liberty. (n.p.)

Institutions of higher education have the capacity to make a significant impact within their communities in both positive and negative
ways. As some of the oldest institutions in our society, their role has been central, evolving, and conflicted. Watson (2007) explains that universities are concurrently tasked with dual roles of “conserving” social traditions while also generating “radical” alternatives. Benneworth and Cunha (2015) remind us that although universities are actors with clear public duties, they also have very strong private interests related to their institutional performance and survival. This duality begins to articulate the multiple and sometimes competing realities of higher education. Barnett (2000, 2003) invokes the idea of an implicit social compact between universities and their societies. What is it that we expect from these institutions and where did these expectations come from? As significant as these institutions are, their configuration, role, and engagement with local communities have and will continue to be dynamic.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF UNIVERSITIES

Medieval universities were structured as urban centers providing technical training in medicine, law, and, most importantly, theology (Bender, 1988). Although many of the earliest medieval institutions did not sustain, European models were very influential in the development of American Colonial models. In 1636, the Great and General Court of Massachusetts Bay granted 400 pounds toward the creation of a college, paving the way for what would later become Harvard College (Geiger, 2014). The intersection of Puritan values, the state, and the college was central to the mission and operations along with its emphasis on liberal education (Geiger, 2014). Harvard College’s mission was to prepare men for the ministry and positions of prominence in community affairs (Geiger, 2014). During the Colonial Period (1607–1776), eight universities were established with the express purpose of training clergy, doctors, and lawyers (Abramson, Damron, Dicks, & Sherwood, 2014).

One of the most significant forces that accelerated the growth of U.S. institutions was the 1862 Morrill Act. Also known as the Land-Grant College Act, the Morrill Act granted federal land to the states. Some states sold the land to finance the creation of new schools; others invested the funds into existing state or private institutions to establish agricultural and other technical foci (Geiger, 2014). These institutions
were designed with professional training in mind, and although learning for learning’s sake did occur, it was deemphasized. The expanded academic focus paired with a more populist approach made education accessible to more than just the elite (Abramson et al., 2014). Furthermore, the second Morrill Act (1890) established many of today’s historically Black universities. These acts symbolized a broader philosophy about the role of higher education. Abramson et al. (2014) state, “a university should have a broader purpose than simply existing to benefit a particular group, increase knowledge for knowledge sake, or generating profits” (p. 15). Over time, the role of these institutions morphed with the broad shifts in American society; Gupton (2014) states:

Although the land grant model met the needs of communities 150 years ago, most land grant institutions no longer serve agrarian communities. As communities surrounding land grant institutions changed, so did these institutions’ priorities. They slowly shifted away from addressing community issues via applied education and research to operating as research and discovery enterprises driven by broader national agendas and funding initiatives rather than local concerns. (n.p.)

Not surprisingly the increase in access to higher education resulted in a spike in enrollments. During the first 30 years of the 20th century, enrollment rose by 50% (Snyder, 1993). Enrollments, influenced by world events, dipped among men during World War II. Women during this period, albeit briefly, comprised 50% of the college-enrolled population (Snyder, 1993). Further accelerating enrollments, the GI Bill made college education affordable to the returning veterans on a scale that had not been seen previously (Milton, 2004). The education provision within the GI Bill resulted in 2.2 million veterans attending 2- and 4-year colleges and universities, accounting for 49% of all 1947 enrollments (Milton, 2004). Before World War II, only 1 in 16 Americans had a college degree (Milton, 2004), compared to 2014, when 34% of the U.S. population had completed a bachelor’s degree (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). Growth of enrollments paired with university capacity remained steady throughout the 1960s (Snyder, 1993). Changes in societal norms around education paired
with employment trends resulting in a shift to a knowledge economy have stoked the steady and continued growth of enrollments in higher education.

WHAT IS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

Boyer (1996) viewed engagement as “connecting the rich resources of the university to our most pressing social, civic, and ethical problems, to our children, to our schools, to our teachers and to our cities” (p. 19). Colleges and universities are uniquely situated within communities, often influencing many facets of a community’s life, including costs and structure of housing, types of amenities and businesses, and the presence of law enforcement. These community features can have direct implications for residences. Harkavy and Hodges (2012) describe the opportunity for colleges and universities to act as “anchor institutions,” noting: “they have the potential to be sources of stability and permanence in civic partnerships with government and the private sector to revitalize local communities” (p. 1). Simply put, the heath, vitality, and culture of both the campus and the community are entangled, and impactful engagement can advance the goals of both parties. Furco and Miller (2009) explain that comprehensive institutional engagement works “synergistically to build and sustain an institutional culture in which community-engaged research, teaching, and public service are valued to the extent that they become fully infused within the academic fabric” (p. 47).

History of Community Engagement

During the rapid industrialization of Victorian London, urban poverty in the East End became a growing concern. In partnership with Vicar Barnett, Arnold Toynbee conceptualized a model of community engagement whereby students from universities such as Cambridge and Oxford would take up residence in London’s East End to collaborate with residents and address social problems. This partnership became the world’s first settlement house, a model that applied collective action to address the unsavory side of industrialization and economic inequality. This model fostered collaboration among
England’s most elite and most disenfranchised populations, with the aim of mutual education and social change. Jane Addams, an American reformer, visited Toynbee Hall on several occasions and was inspired by what she saw. The roots of modern-day community engagement in the United States have been linked to Jane Addams and John Dewey (Morton & Saltmarsh, 1997). Addams is credited with the founding of Hull House in Chicago (along with Ellen Gates Starr) and for fostering the professionalization of social work. The Hull House model was notable because it applied a community development approach—the approach of its contemporary, the Charitable Organization Societies (COS), also founded in the United Kingdom—which emphasized the flawed individual as the locus of social ills. Mayfield (2001) reminds us that most settlement house staff were of means, and many had college degrees they were unable to use in traditional workplaces. Hull House was a space where social work students developed professionally; in applied education opportunities embodying a collaborative model, Hull House advanced the notion that community work should be done in solidarity with rather than servitude to the community. Harkavy and Puckett assert that “Addams and her Chicago colleagues recognized that the social problems of the city are complex, deeply rooted, interdependent phenomena that require holistic ameliorative strategies and support mechanisms if they are to be solved” (1994, p. 309).

Dewey is frequently identified as a thought leader in the area of community engagement and the belief that school should serve a social purpose. Heavily influenced by the Hull House movement, Dewey believed that schools should serve a more robust and holistic function, noting, “the conceptions of the school as a social center is born of our entire democratic movement. Everywhere we see signs of the growing recognition that the community owes to each one of its members the fullest opportunity for development” (p. 86). Also focused on promoting progressive federal social policy and education, Dewey sought to remedy unequal distribution of resources and lack of community cohesion. Particularly influential in the area of contemporary community engagement and applied learning, his views on education, democracy, and learning were deeply integrated. In reviewing Dewey’s legacy, Harkavy (2006) emphasizes his contention that “knowledge and learning are most effective when human beings work collaboratively to solve specific, strategic, real
world problems” (p. 19). The philosophies and models developed by both Addams and Dewey served as the bedrock contemporary community engagement modalities of their time.

The emphases on community engagement declined through the early part of the 20th century (Axelroth & Dubb, 2010). Although not grounded in academic institutions, an emphasis on services was growing in the 1960s in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. Speaking at the University of Kentucky, Johnson (1965) exclaimed,

> Search for new ways [by which] every young American will have the opportunity—and feel the obligation—to give at least a few years of his or her life to the service of others in the nation and in the world.

Our modern-day engagement owes a debt to activists among the late 1960s academics who integrated community work into their curricula (Axelroth & Dubb, 2010).

## CONTEMPORARY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

University-initiated community engagement remained ad hoc through the next couple of decades. In 1985, Campus Compact came on the scene with a mission of promoting the support structures needed to accelerate and improve community engagement. Founded by the presidents of Brown, Stanford, and Georgetown universities and the Education Commission of the states, Campus Compact served a convening and facilitating function aimed at reinvigorating the public purpose of higher education (proper encouragement and supportive structures) (Gearan, 2005). Attempting to provide a counternarrative to the popular media portal of the self-absorbed disengaged Gen X-er, the founders of Campus Compact started one of the most influential organizations in the community engagement world (Gearan, 2005). The momentum fostered by Campus Compact helped to fuel the formalization of many centers of community engagement and service-learning throughout the United States. During the 1990s, many campuses created centers or offices associated with academic affairs to link community-based
teaching, learning, and research to core faculty work (Welch & Saltmarsh, 2013). According to Campus Compact, these centers currently consist of almost 1,100 members. In their 2014 survey of 434 institutions, nearly half are private 4-year institutions, 37% are public 4-year institutions, and 15% are public 2-year institutions (Campus Compact, 2014). As the field became more formalized, so did the shared definition of what constitutes engagement. The New England Resource Center for Higher Education (n.d.) defines community engagement as

Collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity. The purpose of community engagement is the partnership of college and university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good. (n.p.)

Driscoll (2014) identifies the creation of the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement in 2006 as a major force in recent acceleration of interest and practice in community engagement. Driscoll (2014) concluded that of the 100 Carnegie Classified institutions studied, community impacts generally fell into four categories:

Increased capacity for a community group or an agency to fulfill its mission in terms of serving an increased number of clients, coordinating larger scale projects, influencing larger numbers of supporters, extending networks, attracting more funding, and so on.

Improvements in client services, higher standards, more services and resources, and expanded professionals, such as “improved reading scores,” “raised school standards,” “264
new homes for homeless,” “more trained science teachers,” and so on.

Expanded program capacity such as “151 new small businesses as participants,” “global network,” “new initiatives,” and so on. Better relationship(s) with university/college in terms of “university as coeducator,” or “reduced isolation from college.” (n.p.)

CONCLUSION

Understanding the historical rationale for campus–community partnership is critical for determining the future of community engagement. The forces that compel engagement have been dynamic relative to our historical institutions of higher education. As Cortes (2004) aptly states:

For both public and private urban universities in particular, the motivations for becoming more engaged in their surrounding communities have become especially compelling. First, many universities can no longer afford to remain idle while the problems of contemporary urban America envelop their campuses. A university’s ability to recruit students, faculty, and staff can be severely inhibited by a declining physical environment. (p. 344)

Although approaches and philosophies have been variations on the same theme, universities have an ethical and moral obligation to contribute to communities where they operate, and that landscape is constantly changing. Furthermore, the unique relationship between universities and the community can provide multiplier effects for all parties involved in the areas of community development, community support, and scholarship. As Barker (2004) explains:

Instead of seeing the public as a passive recipient of expert knowledge, engaged scholarship stresses that the public can itself contribute to academic knowledge. In their undergraduate teaching, engaged scholars typically make a conscious effort to stress the pedagogical value of
collaborating with publics instead of providing information to or services for publics. (p. 127)

The engaged campus plays an important role in both maintaining and promoting civil society and fostering civic engagement among emerging adults. Grounded in philosophical, historical, and contemporary considerations, the following chapters build on this historical understanding to examine the contemporary model and the accompanying controversial issues, making recommendations for the future of campus–community engagement.

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