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## Working Paper

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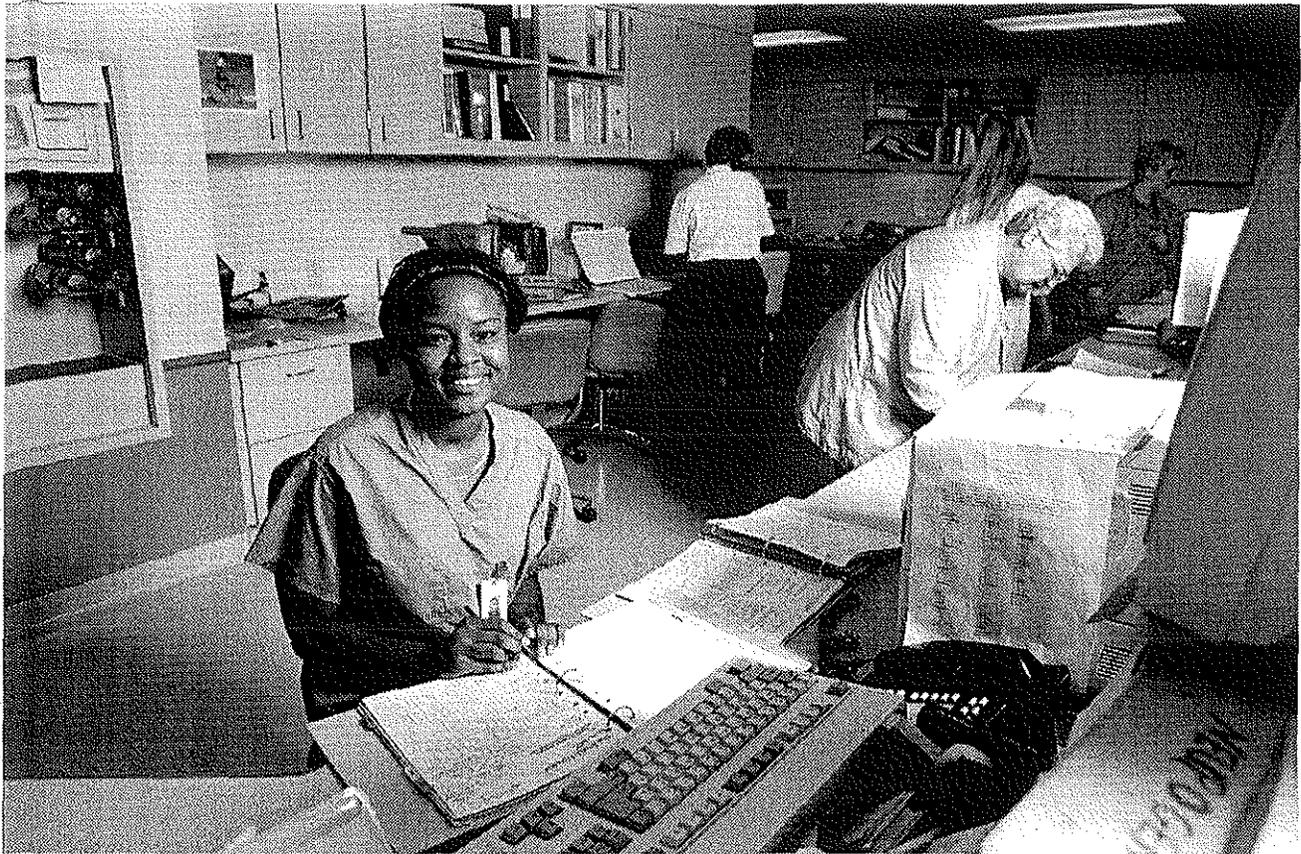
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*Photograph on this page and cover is courtesy of Taylor University.*



Courtesy of College of Mount St. Joseph

To educate students for a lifetime of contribution to society, colleges and universities accept an enormous challenge. Toward this end, they help students pursue a broad range of goals—prepare for careers, acquire a sense of civic responsibility, gain self-awareness, and learn how to learn.

The rich learning environments important in realizing these learning goals certainly include the range of experiences accessible without leaving the campus, from classrooms to labs to Web sites to dorms to athletic fields. Increasingly, however, these on-campus experiences are insufficient, by themselves, if we expect students to achieve these ambitious, liberal education outcomes. Institutions will also need to enable students to participate in the world beyond the campus as a part of their formal educational program, via experiences such as internships, community-based service, and even paid work. Indeed, students have been actively seeking these kinds of experiences, and their presence in educational programs has grown.

The increased use of these varieties of experiential learning in colleges and universities, however, raises basic questions about the evolving character of higher education. How essential for students is this experiential, beyond-the-campus aspect of education? How much does it change the way faculty teach...and are evaluated? What kind of

knowledge is generated in this way? What relationships with outside organizations—businesses, governments, schools, community groups—will colleges have? Are different kinds of staff needed?

This paper proposes a set of answers to these questions, arguing that this type of learning in the world is increasingly essential and should be woven into the fabric of institutions, and that this learning requires significant changes on the part of individual faculty as well as institutions. The document presents our best present understanding of what should be addressed as institutions and communities engage more interdependently with each other.

CIC is distributing this document in draft form to acknowledge the evolving nature of these ideas. At this point, the ideas emerge from six years of work on connections between colleges and their surrounding environs (see box on facing page), but we expect the current project, *Engaging Communities and Campuses*, to extend and deepen this understanding. Since the ideas presented in this document will guide particular project activities, including collection and dissemination of existing campus resources, workshops, and a grants competition, we welcome any feedback. We expect to develop additional versions of this working paper during the course of this several year program.

## Learning and Acting in the World

Many institutions are coming to understand that learning in the world beyond the campus can bring profound educational benefits. Yet this learning differs in a fundamental way from on-campus learning—it is in the world. A campus, in part, creates safe spaces unhooked from the world; and what students and faculty do on campus in the pursuit of learning does not necessarily have immediate consequences beyond those boundaries. But when students and faculty are in the world, engaged in activities with learning potential, they are inevitably in contact with community residents and organizations, so what students and faculty do in this context can have real consequences for others. That is, students are not only learning but also acting. Thus all parties, community groups and campus representatives, have an ethical mandate to attend to both intended and unintended consequences of their shared work and learning in the midst of community situations.

Therefore, to envision the full potential of communities and campuses engaging with each other we start with two guiding considerations—student learning and community interests. The argument at the heart of this paper is that these two sets of goals can, when taken together, provide significant mutual benefit, but that important work lies ahead of us if we are to realize these benefits.

### Ambitious learning outcomes

Learning is obviously a central consideration, especially for private liberal arts institutions, which not only consider student learning their preeminent goal but indeed set their sights for this learning intentionally high, nurturing students to aspire not just for jobs but for meaningful careers that contribute to society, not just for a knowledge of civics but for sustained involvement in responsible and active citizenship. The intent is that graduates should find a moral imperative in improving their world, that they will

### Examples of experiential education

- teacher education practicums
- business internships
- voluntary service in community organizations
- clinical training (e.g., nursing, social work)
- tutoring K-12 students
- community-based research
- service-based experiential learning

care deeply about larger public purposes such as democratic engagement, justice, economic vitality, and a pluralistic society.

Learning in the world must become a key component of educational programs seeking these ambitious goals, since that is where students can engage the actual problems that connect students to the common hopes of the society. Many colleges do, in fact, accommodate an array of learning experiences taking place beyond campus boundaries, including internships, community-based volunteer activities, service-learning, problem-based learning, and action research. These educational approaches, typically labeled experiential learning, share certain basic characteristics. First, learners are engaged in experiences in the world that provide both educational context and content. Often, these experiences are connected to disciplines, professional fields, or other structured educational programs. Second, the college or university provides opportunities to reflect on these experiences in order to promote deeper and broader learning. Importantly, research has begun to document the considerable educational power of this learning. In addition, many students also combine education with full- or part-time work; and colleges may also find an untapped experiential learning potential there, especially for students beyond the traditional college age.

We think that most institutions could enhance student learning not only by expanding their use of these approaches but also, more subtly, by acknowledging and enabling their full power. As these pedagogies have gained ground within higher education, the learning benefits have often been cast too narrowly. For example, internships have been seen as largely for career preparation, with community-based service principally developing civic responsibility. But in reality, not only do they both hinge upon activities beyond the campus, but the common outcomes are also more striking than the differences. Both provide opportunities to learn similar skills and gain similar understandings, require a pedagogy of reflection for full benefit, and enrich student resumes and portfolios. And, of course, both allow students to develop the sort of self-knowledge and habits of

### CIC/CAPHE Projects

Serving to Learn, Learning to Serve (1993-95)

Serving to Learn, Learning to Serve in Promoting  
School Success (1996-98)

College/Community Partnerships  
(Phase 1:1993-96) (Phase 2:1996-99)

Implementing Urban Missions (1997-2001)

Engaging Communities and Campuses (1998-2002)

A middle school requested assistance with helping improve (raise scores to grade level) reading skills of seventh graders from families placed at risk by the culture. Preservice teacher education students in a reading class became involved along with their professor. A Planning and Impact Assessment Team, consisting of a principal, two teachers, two college faculty, a parent, and a pre-service teacher met often to determine impacts sought for the seventh graders, the middle school, the department of education at the college, the preservice group, and the total college. By the end of the second year of the arrangement, the education department had changed the time of its reading class to correspond with the time the seventh graders were ready for their assistance; a part time faculty member from the college was assigned to the middle school to assist with multiple levels of teacher preparation and middle school teacher continuing education; the entire Education Department curriculum began to initiate community based service learning components; and the reading scores went up,

learning that lie at the heart of liberal education.

Accordingly, this paper assumes that these various forms of experiential learning have much greater educational power than has typically been granted. We think that this range of ways to learn in the world can contribute to all of the most frequently mentioned goals of undergraduate education—preparation for careers, nurturing of civic responsibility, learning how to learn in multiple settings, and development of self-knowledge and personal habits of learning—often simultaneously. As institutions seek to help students gain more specific competencies, such as critical thinking and problem-solving, or cooperation and communication, learning in the world has the potential to assist students in pulling together these abilities in an integrated way. We encourage institutions to treat learning beyond the campus and in the world as one of the most basic and widely used educational strategies available to achieve broad student learning outcomes. The dynamic of this learning is richly complex. Students (and also faculty), engaging with community defined dilemmas and ideas, are pushed to seek new understandings—of ways to apply disciplinary knowledge, of new information or perspectives they did not know they needed, of their own inner motivations, of their compassion or passion, of an ethic of service, and of the intertwining of all of these. These experiences in the world require deep reflection not only at the level of the student and faculty, but also with community residents and organizational staff as well. If conceived by institutions and their

faculty as intentionally linked to the academic or extracurricular program, such experiential learning can influence the overall educational program itself as well as the roles played by faculty. For instance, the educational program will draw on a wider set of resources in creating learning opportunities and realize the broader range of learning outcomes espoused by liberal arts institutions. Mastering disciplinary content can be more compelling within a meaningful context; skills such as team work and communication will assume a reality often lacking on campus; attitudes of inclusion can be nurtured through greater contact with diverse communities; and motivation to learn can be enhanced.

### Interests of the community

The second conceptual building block of community and campus engagement is valuing the voices and challenges of residents and organizations within a community.

Community residents, as individuals, family members, small interest groups, or neighborhoods, often experience a current reality of struggling *for* something (e.g. dreams, better jobs, housing and education, cleaner environment, quiet, dignity, respect) or struggling *against* something (e.g. aggressive power, poverty, poor public services, limited job opportunities, violence, inadequate housing or police protection, addictions, or “urban removal”). These struggles define, on the terms of the people who express them, action and learning tasks for students and faculty from the colleges as well as action and learning tasks for the community residents and organizations.

Within a community a variety of organizations—for-profit businesses, governmental/public service units, non-profits, and community based organizations—serve, in a myriad ways, the interests of the community. Community residents involve themselves in this organizational web by deciding to procure goods or services, by electing public officials with particular points of view, or by forming new groups for special purposes. Generally therefore, individuals, work through or rely on these organizations as they pursue their struggles *for* and *against*. Community residents as well as students and colleges must discern the extent to which these organizations understand their communities and express the voices of community residents.

Just as colleges and universities have much to gain as they engage with communities, so to do community organizations as they engage with higher educational institutions. Students who are properly prepared and placed can make genuine contributions, and other institutional resources can often be part of the mix (e.g. collecting and organizing information, leadership training, planning, extra hands). Institutional representatives must realize, however, that including students and faculty in these settings becomes a

challenge for these community organizations as they seek to meet their priority obligations to their customers, staff, share holders, or the general public. These workplaces are often characterized by a practical impulse to address concrete situations rather than worry about theoretical relevance. Results are measured in terms of goods produced, services delivered, and the proverbial "bottom line," creating a cultural milieu where issues of power, control, role clarification and getting the work done on time and with high quality are real and omnipresent.

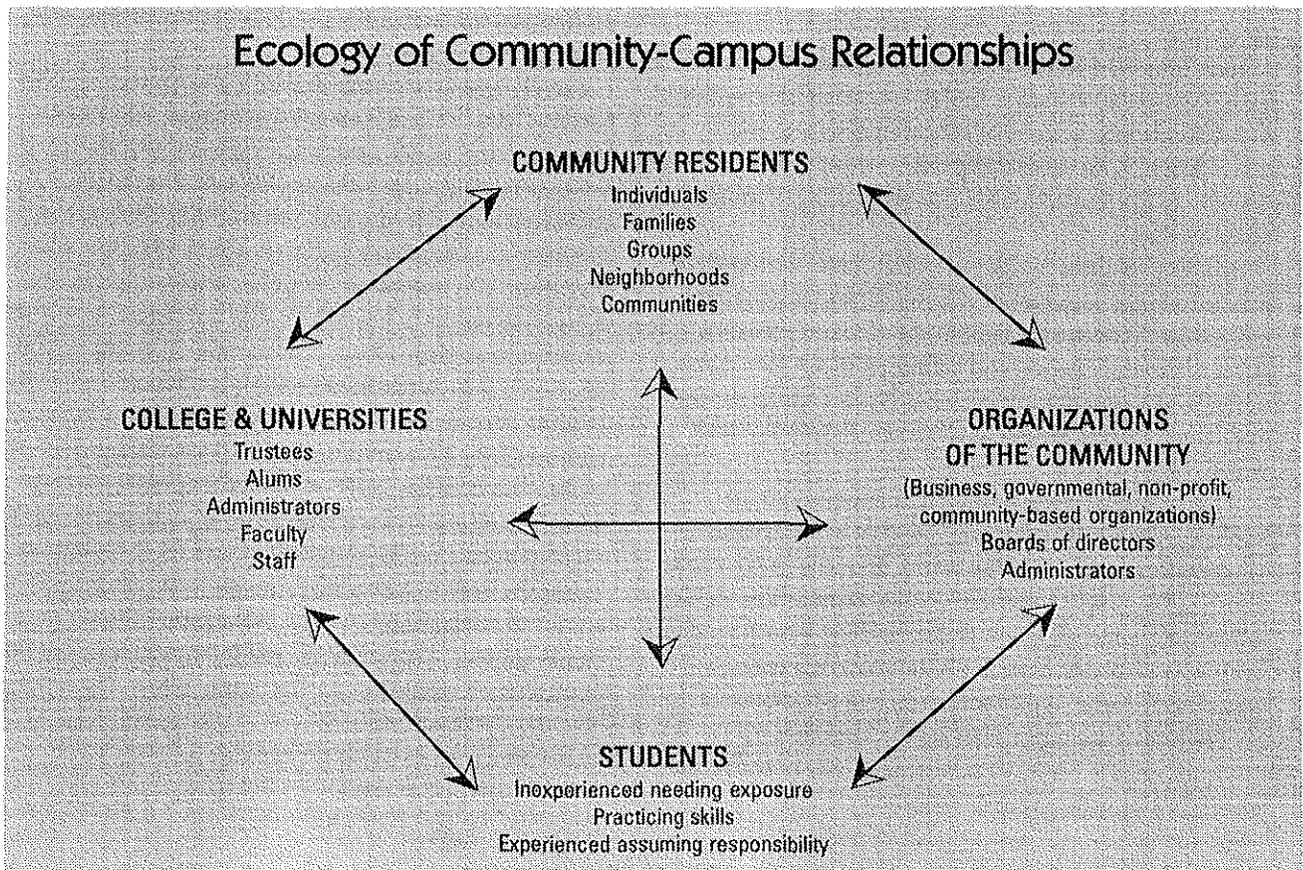
Higher educational institutions seeking to address community interests must discover authentic voices of individuals and of organizations, and in so doing acknowledge the values of these residents and recognize organizational priorities to serve the community. Community residents and organizations can provide a kind of "practice wisdom" based on their experiences that can create learning resources for students and faculty. When colleges listen over time to community residents' stories and situations in a relationship of emerging trust, it becomes possible to develop shared definitions of problems that can be tackled collaboratively. Community residents are more forthcoming when the organizations of the community and the colleges relate to them as acquirers (they have a voice in determining what it is that will go on in their lives) rather than as

recipients (others coming to fix them). Community residents will also fulfill the dual roles of being teacher for faculty, students, and staff of community organizations as well as having to help in clarifying their own learning agenda to get their own work done.

### Engaging... an ecology of community-campus relationships

Discovering common ground at the interface of the two starting points—student learning and community interests—is the primary challenge for engaging communities and campuses.

To do this, we need to see higher educational institutions as members of a living web of individuals and organizations that jointly contribute to a tangible geographic identity. As integral members of the communities in which they were founded and have made their histories, colleges are employers, land owners, landlords, purchasers of goods, procurers of services, gatekeepers of educational opportunities, and cultural centers. Many students come from nearby communities and many return to work and contribute as citizens in those communities. Faculty and staff contribute as members of those same communities. Elements of an educational program are often based on needs of local organizations and increasingly use experiential learning pedagogical ap-



A rural college has worked with a community of farmers, teachers, planners, industrialists, government officials, religious groups, bankers, and non-governmental workers. By generating partnerships between faculty, students and community members, The Center for Economic and Environmental Development (CEED) promotes sustainable agriculture, sustainable forestry, energy conservation, curriculum for sustainability, strategic environmental management, pollution prevention, ecotourism, sustainable visioning, and the integration of art and aesthetics with environmental protection. The watershed encompasses over 1,200 square miles and a population of 250,000. Faculty and students learn from the community about its needs, problems and possibilities. Community members, students and faculty work together to create a sustainable economic and environmental future.

proaches such as internships and service-learning.

We might even detect an inherent institutional groundedness—perhaps reminiscent of the mythical Antaeus, who renewed his strength by touching the earth, and indeed could only be defeated by Hercules when Hercules lifted him off the ground and thus away from his sustenance.

Such profound connections to surrounding communities are not inevitably valued in higher education, but we think that this concrete richness of educational setting and experience can, for those independent colleges and universities who fully engage, provide one more pillar of institutional vitality.

As a way to envision this ecological space, we highlight four (of a larger number) of distinct constituency groups: community residents, organizations of the community, colleges and universities, and college students. (See diagram on page 11.) Importantly, each has its own needs, dreams, and assets. Each is teacher and learner, contributor and beneficiary.

This ecological picture draws our attention to the multiple relationships not only possible but inevitable as students learn and act in the world. To move in the direction of sustaining partnerships, these relationships require a common ground of shared understanding, interdependence, and reciprocity that have not been frequently enough practiced between higher education and communities.

The rest of this paper outlines the steps that many institutions have begun to take as they seek to realize the significant benefits of engagement.

## Building Institutional Capacity

To achieve a synergy that enhances both student learning and community interests, colleges and universities must create several types of capacity.\* Many private institutions have taken some steps in this direction, but lessons from a number of institutions working in this area suggest that more comprehensive and interconnected approaches may be warranted. Though it is unlikely that all institutions will establish identical strategies, an institution serious about weaving experiential learning into the fabric of the institution will need, at least, to consider the following: assisting faculty to develop knowledge and skills, establishing an infrastructure to relate to community organizations, attending to the overall academic culture, and establishing partner relationships with community organizations

### 1. Faculty Knowledge and Skills

To assist those faculty wanting to do this work as well as those who currently see barriers to their participation, institutions must assist faculty members to develop relevant knowledge and skills. In fact, expertise in the pedagogy of experiential learning seems a strong candidate, along with presenting material, communicating electronically, and promoting collaborative learning, to become an essential pedagogical competence of the 21<sup>st</sup> century faculty member. Unfortunately, neither graduate school nor their years as a professional has necessarily provided them with the skills needed for this work.

Faculty appreciate ways in which the community can become “text.” There is an epistemological aspect to learning in the world. Listening to community residents, or business managers, or social agency staff describe their challenges and engaging with them as they work toward solutions can alter not only how students learn but what they learn. The complexity of public and workplace situations often results in knowledge that is different from that available in academic form. The dilemmas and opportunities which face communities today are often so unique that colleges discover that their knowledge base is inadequate to address them. This community-based knowledge does not replace but enriches more traditional academic offerings. More opportunities for the discovery of new knowledge for social purposes can be imagined as well. This realization opens the door to a powerful concept—the community as a source of teachers and of some of the most critical educational content. This particular point has relevance not only for student learning but for the faculty role in discovering

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\* It is possible to imagine a mirror image of these proposed capacities from the perspective of organizations in the community, and one of our goals in this project is eventually to produce such a companion piece.

and interpreting knowledge.

Faculty help students develop cross-cultural awareness. Involvement beyond the campus can often mean engaging with different cultures. Businesses and community organizations are comprised of communities of practice with their own world views and norms. Groups of community residents may be organized around ties of nationality, ethnicity, or belief different from those of students or faculty. Faculty must be able to work within these settings themselves as well as help students understand, appreciate, and learn from this cultural variety. Even the learning modes (e.g., is there a pedagogy of storytelling?) are likely to vary.

Faculty help students place learning in broader contexts. Internships that are part of a professional major usually have such a wider career frame around them, but do faculty help students spot the career relevance in service experiences? In general, faculty should enable students to identify personal values as well as larger societal issues or public policy implications embodied in specific student activities. Sometimes students raise these issues on their own, but faculty need an ability to connect the very specific

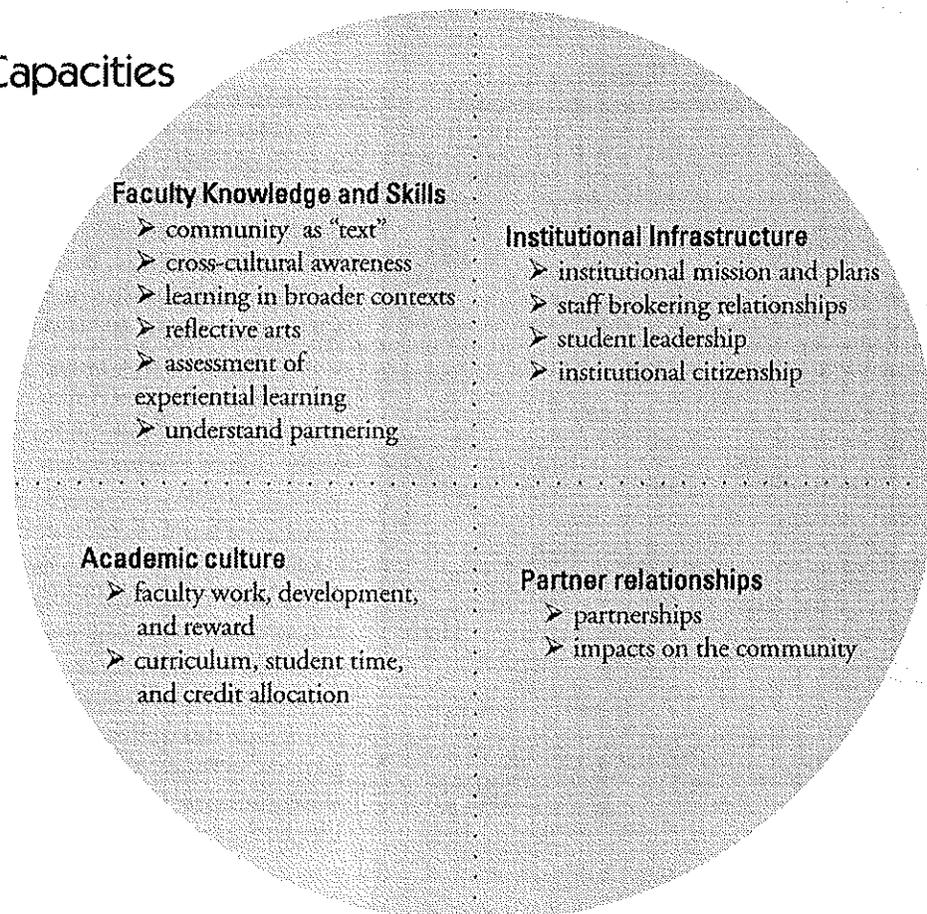
action next door with the larger social dynamic, with common purposes, and with the public space that we all share.

Faculty practice the reflective arts. For the most part, opportunities to reflect on experiences in the world are essential for learning. Faculty need a repertoire of tools (from writing to discussions) that can prompt student reflection.

Faculty assess student experiential learning. Faculty will also require tools to assess this kind of student learning. Some of the reflective approaches will also have assessment potential. In addition, highly integrative devices such as student portfolios will be important.

Faculty understand partnering. Much of the current delivery of education is done by faculty members acting individually, but experiential learning typically requires two kinds of partners. One is the institutional colleague, such as the service-learning coordinator, who often scouts out settings in the world and establishes relationships with staff of community organizations. The second partner is the staff of those community organizations. Even when a coordinator is the primary contact with the outside organization,

## Institutional Capacities



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faculty need to understand the mutuality of interest and the behavioral boundaries that undergird relationships between the college and its partner organizations. In both of these cases, faculty need to understand the faculty contribution to the work (not only their subject matter expertise but the competencies mentioned above), the important roles played by coordinators and community organizations, and where faculty initiative might be constrained by the needs of their partners.

## 2. Institutional Infrastructure

One clear lesson to date is that relating to community organizations and residents is very labor intensive (corresponding, we think, to the significant student learning gains) and thus requires a significant level of institutional commitment and staffing.

**Top administrators frame learning and acting in the world in terms of institutional mission and strategic plans.** Leaders need to shape and articulate an institutional story that weaves together institutional mission, student learning, and community interests. This story should be embodied in overall institutional plans, budgets, and documents, since

The Service-Learning Center of a college works as a "match-maker" between the local community and college faculty and students. Currently over 30 faculty representing virtually every discipline integrate Service-Learning into a regular course each semester. During the summers of 1997 and 1998, faculty workshops were held primarily at community sites to explore, "Are we really meeting true community needs, are we making an impact on the problems and sources of poverty in the community, and are we working in partnership with the community in ways that bring growth and learning to both or are we simply just conducting a beneficial exchange of service for education for students?" Partnerships which had emerged explored the needs of each stakeholder involved, identified outcomes desired by each partner and developed a shared mission for the impact of the work. These workshops provided faculty and community staff the time and space necessary for creative dialogue and building relationships. They explored core issues facing the city, with a focus emerging to actually make an impact on addressing these as partners. Internal dialogue with the college has increased and a community of faculty has emerged committed to further increase the college's sense of partnership with the local community.

it affects the institution in a number of places and at several levels.

**Professional staff broker community and institutional relationships.** Coordinators of internships, service-learning, or experiential learning can be the primary institutional contacts with community residents and organizations, and can support faculty and students. In addition, they can establish clearinghouses and databases of community opportunities. Administratively, these tasks can be structured in various ways, using part-time or full-time staff as well as using students in these roles.

**Students provide complementary leadership.** Much of current activity has been student driven, and student-run organizations constitute a key part of the institution's infrastructure for being in the world. Institutions need ways to blend student leadership into coordinated approaches to enhancing learning and addressing community interests.

**Institutions practice citizenship.** To emphasize the seriousness with which institutions take both the educational potential and the community improvement potential of engaging with communities, institutions should, in their various non-educational connections with the community, act as a committed member of the community. The range of institutional policies and practices can thus contribute to the overall campus climate of legitimacy and priority for this work.

## 3. Academic culture

In addition to providing individual faculty with appropriate tools and skills, institutions can attend to the overall institutional framework for faculty work, development, and reward, and for student learning.

**Institutions allocate, develop, and reward faculty work and responsibilities that recognize the value of learning and contributing in the world.** Certainly institutions need to assist faculty in developing relevant knowledge and skills and to provide staff and other support mentioned in the two prior sections. But institutions also must establish an overall faculty culture of expectation—from faculty recruitment materials to policy manuals to tenure discussions—that indicate the institutional priority given these approaches. Finally, institutions need to factor this work into measures of workload and criteria for faculty evaluation.

**Institutions recognize the implications of learning in the world for student time, credit allocation, and curricular sequence.** Experiential learning requires that students spend their time differently than in the standard course patterns, so faculty should consider the use of student time as they integrate experiential learning into curricula and allocate credit.



Courtesy of College of Mount St. Joseph

#### 4. Partner relationships

The final essential institutional capacity is developing long-term, reciprocal relationships with community organizations. Together, the institution and its partner organizations can discover and establish opportunities for student (and faculty) activity that both enhances student learning and meets community interests.

**Institutions and community organizations form partnerships.** Here the focus is on identifying the goals sought and assets brought by all parties. Formal mechanisms, such as advisory bodies and written agreements, can be important in framing the necessary mutuality and reciprocity. Institutions and community organizations can collaborate both in defining problems and in devising work that can achieve enhanced student learning and address community interests.

**Institutions gauge the impacts of learning and acting in the world on the community.** One difficulty with this broad ecological perspective is that faculty and administrators cannot control or even know of much of what transpires between various parties beyond the campus. So these individuals need ways of learning, in general, how things are going. Interestingly, there will typically be a symmetry in the individual impacts for both students and community residents (e.g., specific knowledge, interpersonal skills) and

in the organizational impacts on institutions, business, and agencies (e.g., programs, policies, cultures). As noted earlier, a particularly important challenge for institutions is being aware of those occasions when the specific program activities are actually making matters worse. Institutions should develop means to assess the effects of learning and acting in the world activities on the range of individuals and organizations participating.

**T**hese four areas support each other in powerful ways. Thus individuals working to enhance institutional capacity in one of these areas should be cognizant of the implications for other aspects of the institution. The potential mutual benefits—for students and communities—seem considerable for those colleges and universities that can build a capacity to engage in genuine partnerships.



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