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EDUCATING A COMMITTED CITIZENRY

BY FAITH GABELNICK



If we want our students to acquire the democratic virtues of honesty, tolerance, empathy, generosity, teamwork, and social responsibility, we have to demonstrate those qualities not only in our individual professional conduct but also in our institutional policies," writes Alexander Astin in "What Higher Education Can Do in the Cause of Citizenship" (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 6, 1995).

"The future of American Democracy," Astin continues, "is, to a certain extent, in our hands, and if we want to improve it we have to change...our ways of doing things."

Parker Palmer, writing in *Change's* September/October 1987 issue, asserts that to build community and a sense of civic virtue, we must shift the educational paradigm, rethinking the ways we teach and the ways we engage students: "I want to go beyond altering the social forms of education...beyond altering the topical content...and try to reach into the underlying nature of our knowledge itself."

The challenge of educating a committed citizenry is to change the societal and university paradigm from a strategy of competitiveness to one of collaboration, from a perspective of scarcity to one of sufficiency and inclusion, and from a stance that looks for expedient solutions to one that engages and commits to a series of values and a way of life.

This paradigm shift lies beyond simple curricular adjustment: it resides in epistemological questions about who we are and how we shall live our lives with others. That challenge, so well observed by de Tocqueville and eloquently elaborated in Bellah's *Habits of the Heart*, resides essentially in the tension between the individual and the larger global community. Our educational experiences need to help us to think about this tension and to navigate through its seemingly paradoxical choices.

When we think about skills necessary to engage as active, responsible citizens, we must think in both individual and institu-

tional terms. Students need skills in leadership and multicultural awareness, and for participatory community projects: faculty need certain skills to promote these competencies throughout the curriculum; their institutions in turn must support faculty development, cross-departmental collaboration, special programming, and external support. Difficult as it may be, the university or college itself in effect needs to become a partner with the internal and external communities it wishes to nurture.

On campuses, these choices are often framed as if they were mutually exclusive. Students are asked whether they have come to college to get a credential and make money or to serve others. Faculty discuss endlessly the relationship between content (by which they mean delivery of material) and process (by which they mean all the other "stuff" that engages students in a variety of learning activities), as if the two cannot be combined. Discussions of race, gender, and social currency are often framed in mutually exclusive positions. All the while, these discussions connect to larger debates in society and to real challenges that face our students, our faculty, and the workforce more generally.

Corporations and the public at large demand that graduates be prepared for an increasingly competitive world, demands usually couched in terms of specific preparation. At some multinational and high-tech corporations, for example, job or internship applicants' résumés are scanned into a computer to form a large database: when an opening occurs, the prospective employer puts in a few key words and generates a list of persons to be interviewed. Students find themselves competing not only with students from local colleges and universities but with students in India, Japan, or England.

We can talk philosophically, then, about educating students for civic responsibility, but we are reminded daily of the pressures on students to find good employment and repay loans, then to succeed in an increasingly unpredictable workplace. Sometimes it seems *as if* we have to choose between education for a committed, complex life and one of practicality for survival.

While we struggle with these choices, we are also strug-

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ILLUSTRATION BY CHARLES POLESIS

gling to find new frameworks for educating a committed citizenry, frameworks that sit at the boundary between self and the larger society, between the needs of a few and the benefits of many. The "difficult discourse" that marks this struggle has, over the past two decades, moved some campuses toward a new democracy of multiplicity: many voices, many ideas, multiple commitments. Higher education, even as it leaves behind a posture of *in loco parentis*, is yet recognizing for itself an enduring role in providing for dialogue and for considered commitment to a set of values.

CURRICULAR MODELS

The educational landscape of the past 20 years reveals a series of patterns, themes, and educational initiatives that have created a philosophical curricular trend that is changing the way we think about learning. While the "sage on the stage" is still the common pedagogical mode, other philosophies of learning are now present on college campuses in the form of learning communities, general education programs, experiential learning programs, women's studies programs, ethnic studies programs, service-learning projects, undergraduate research, and ethics centers. These enabling, democratic initiatives are flourishing even as the public demands more evidence of competency and as access becomes more problematic.

Present in all types of institutions, these programs are used

for different types of institutional renewal and contribute directly to a civic stance within the university and at the intersection of university and community: they teach important leadership skills by incorporating collaborative learning experiences within classes. They also shift the locus of authority from the teacher to the interactions among teacher, student, and other resources; they imbed in the curriculum ideas of social justice, community responsibility, and respect for difference. For example, learning communities intentionally restructure the course unit through different types of linkages or connections and engage faculty and students in reconceptualizing social, economic, political, and multicultural issues.

Using themes such as "The Individual in Society" or "Technology and Human Issues in Democracy," students work together to build knowledge and insights that they could not learn independently. Learning communities that are called Linked Courses, Clusters, Coordinated Studies Programs, Freshman Interest Groups (FIGS), or Federated Learning Communities are used primarily to build cross-disciplinary coherence into general education programs at freshman levels, but increasingly are being used at upper levels for both general education/capstone purposes and for building more connection within majors. (See Gabelnick *et al.*, in box.)

Student retention in learning communities is high because students feel they are active participants in their education.

RESOURCES

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They can confront each other, create meaning jointly with other students and faculty, and discover and experience how group work deepens individual insight. Learning communities move students and faculty into a collaborative learning arena. Faculty appreciate the opportunity to discover new connections across disciplines and to break out of the isolating class unit. These experiences can translate into other community efforts, breaking down the idea of learning alone, being alone, teaching alone.

Many general education programs now address issues such as social responsibility, ethical action, gender politics, multiculturalism, and global awareness. For example, in Occidental College's general education program, which is called "Cultural Studies," students take such courses as "Women of Color in the United States," "Technology and Culture," and "The Great Migrations."

In these classes and through their assignments, students study issues of race, gender, and class, as well as the social, political, and economic realities in California and in the United States as a whole. (See Association of American Colleges and Universities, in box.) Engaging in difficult dialogues about race, class, and gender, they are learning a more complex view of civic responsibility and engagement that connects them vitally with our nation's most important issues.

Over the past 10 years, general education programs, learning communities, and other types of curricular reform that are focused on engaging faculty and students on hundreds of college campuses in building community responsibility have been supported by major grants from the U.S. Department of Education including the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), from the National Endowment for the Humanities, and from the National Science Foundation. Jerry Gaff, Alexander Astin, Zelda Gamson, and others have argued that learning in community not only strengthens our educational vitality and decreases alienation in the educational workplace, but prepares students to be competent leaders in professional work environments.

A plethora of writing on pedagogy, experiential learning, and community service has emerged to accompany these new approaches in higher education.

For the past 12 years, the Washington Center for the Im-

provement of Undergraduate Education has engaged almost all of the universities, independent colleges, and community colleges in the state of Washington to promote educational reform in the context of civic and social responsibility. The center has sponsored important conferences on learning communities, critical thinking, diversity, and curricular reform. Administrators and faculty have participated in sessions to assess learning and to take the learning into the community.

In Oregon, Portland State University, building on the learning community and community-service model, has created a four-year comprehensive general education program that is interdisciplinary and community-based and is linked to the university's distinctive urban mission.

As President Judith Ramaley writes: "At Portland State the learning community concept is utilized at each level of the undergraduate curriculum...and a strong community linkage is integrated into the community at each stage. What makes the experience of Portland State so instructive is that the community base is campuswide and involves all academic programs in disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and problem-focused modes....All of our students will participate in community-based learning and research at some point during their education." (See box.)

Through these and other programs, students find themselves in a variety of field experiences, as well as undergraduate research, community service, and social/political projects. In so many ways, on so many campuses, students are invited to learn by doing and to reflect on their learning with faculty and other students. It is an exciting time to be a student, and an exciting time to be a faculty member. Our educational landscape has been ignited by a "common fire" of civic involvement and change. (See Daloz, in box.)

Much of the leadership and support for the new civic responsibility has come from the major American foundations.

The Kellogg Foundation has long provided support for volunteerism and philanthropy as well as promoted leaders working to change our society. Its mission, "To help people help themselves," is illustrated in grants such as one to Bay Mills Community College in Brimley, Michigan. Bay Mills, a tribal-controlled college, is launching an effort to link 29 other

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tribal-controlled colleges with 30 mainstream institutions that have high numbers of Native Americans. Its purpose is to make higher education more accessible to Native Americans through environmental, systemic changes on these campuses and through a sensitivity—supported by college services—to the economic, social, and political challenges these students face. (See W.K. Kellogg Foundation, in box.) This program is designed to help Native Americans reclaim their lives and assure a better future for themselves and their children.

Kellogg's National Leadership Program, now more than 10 years old, provides three-year leadership fellowships to faculty, administrators, and public officials who construct learning plans for social, political, or academic change. A framing concept for the fellowship program is Robert Greenleaf's idea of the "servant-leader." Greenleaf wrote that leadership emerges from a "natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*." (See box.)

Servant-leadership is healing, intuitive, and compassionate and promotes a stance that looks to the future while caring intensely about the present. The Greenleaf Center in Indianapolis has taken up the work of its namesake to promote programs that foster civic virtue. Such programs as "Servant-Leadership," "Team Spirit," "Personal Journey Through Servant-Leadership," and "Servant-Leadership: A Foundation for Effective Organizational Change" are open to faculty, administrators, and citizens to help reframe the ways we think about ourselves as leaders.

Most recently, the Kellogg Foundation under its new president, William Richardson, a former provost and university president, established a new Kellogg Commission that "will help U.S. colleges and universities define the directions that higher education should go in the future and recommend an action agenda to hasten the change process." (See W. K. Kellogg, in box.)

The topics the commission will address include "increasing access to higher education for all members of society; revising traditional reward systems on campus; and establishing new outreach programs...for students that allow more learning to take place in a community setting." John V. Byrne, the commission's executive director, is also a former university president. This transformational servant-leadership at the highest level of universities, foundations, and national associations reflects the priority that civic education has become for higher education in the 1990s.

When the Kellogg Foundation established its funding area in philanthropy and volunteerism several years ago, it supported the important work of Campus Compact—an organization founded in 1985 by the presidents of Brown, Georgetown, and Stanford Universities and the Education Commission of the States to promote community service and civic responsibility on college campuses in response to public perceptions of students as materialistic and self-consumed. This national effort was, in part, a response to higher education studies in the early

1980s that called for an academic/curricular renewal and a counterbalance to the "Me Decade" of the 1970s.

In the late 1980s, three state Compacts (California, Michigan, and Pennsylvania) were formed to strengthen and focus the work of the national Campus Compact. In Michigan, the Kellogg Foundation—through Campus Compact—provided an initial three-year grant to five founding colleges and universities to assist the institutions in developing community activities: math hotlines, tutoring programs, high school athletic support programs, service-learning fairs, community clean-ups, and a variety of mentoring programs.

There are now 18 state Compacts, funded by campus dues and grants from local and national foundations, with memberships in each state consisting of diverse groups of institutions.

A three-year grant from the Ford Foundation, then under the directorship of Deborah Hirsch, launched one of the main emphases of Campus Compact—linking academic study with service learning. In the early 1990s, Campus Compact sponsored three summer institutes in which 40 institutions of all types—private research universities, public state universities, private colleges, and two-year institutions—came together to plan such programs and to learn how to facilitate active civic engagement. These projects included not only the development of service-learning centers but ways to involve and support faculty who wanted to teach courses in civic responsibility.

The impact Campus Compact has had on the curriculum and on changing the way we think about the university and the community is impressive. In its most recent *Sourcebook for Community Service in Higher Education*, Campus Compact lists dozens of exemplary programs and courses that further its mission. An example is the course entitled "Community Service 101" at California State University-Fresno: "Nearly 700 students enrolled...in 1995-96...contributing over 25,000 hours of community service." This course and others like it at many universities provide a space for reflection on community-service experiences and enable students to integrate their external learning with on-campus issues. (See Kobrin and Mareth in box.)

Within the curricula on college and university campuses are hundreds—perhaps thousands—of courses that specifically address civic responsibility and social awareness. Titles such as "Service, Economics, and the Community" (Nazareth College of Rochester), "Philosophy of Service" (Andrews University, Michigan), and "Community Involvement" (Brevard Community College, Florida) convey this direction.

At Swarthmore College, according to its course catalogues, a course entitled "Community Politics/Internship Seminar"... examines the meaning of American democracy in the face of persuasive injustice and inequality...through public service internships, dialogue with local activists, community building within the class, reading assignments, journal writing, field trips and group exercises...." Clearly, students work in com-

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munity with faculty to expand their knowledge and their connections to the world.

There are increasing numbers of programs with curricula focused on service and civic responsibility. "The Student Leadership Academy" at Lansing Community College combines classroom learning with hands-on experience in community service and leadership positions. A new "Master's Program in Social Responsibility" at St. Cloud State University prepares students for "the practice of social responsibility from Western and non-Western perspectives."

The goals of the program, which are strong, idealistic, and framed in terms of civic virtue, help students to "understand and utilize the scholarship and intellectual thought of women and various cultural groups for greater social responsibility; develop greater sensitivity to the values of a multicultural and ever-changing world and teach others this sensitivity for greater social responsibility; acquire knowledge of the social, intellectual, and artistic foundation of culture and history from Western and non-Western perspectives; and develop skills for productive and responsible living, such as creative and critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and self-understanding."

The International and National Voluntary Service Training (INVST) program at the University of Colorado is a two-year leadership program providing perspectives on "global development, non-violent social change, conflict resolution, and community problem-solving on issues such as poverty, racism and social justice....Students commit to at least two years of community service following their graduation from the program." The Corporation for National Service cites this program as a national model.

There are programs that engage students in specific projects at most major higher education institutions. Projects on the environment are carried on at institutions such as Alverno College, Whitman College, Brown University, University of South Carolina, Wheaton College (MA), and SUNY Binghamton. Projects on hunger are under way at institutions such as Pace University, Morris Brown College, Grinnell College, Frostburg State University, and University of Hawaii Kapiolani Community College. And projects on voting issues are in operation at institutions such as Bradley University, Pima Community College, University of Miami, Brevard Community College, University of Southern California, and UCLA.

Some statistics on the involvement of campuses in public service are equally impressive. The number of Campus Compact member institutions from 1995 to 1996 was 512. Of these institutions, 74 percent offer service-learning courses, 30 percent consider faculty service in tenure evaluation, 41 percent conduct research on public-service issues, and 92 percent mention civic responsibility or service in their missions. Over 540,000 students participated in service learning in 1995-96 in areas such as health, literacy, housing, homelessness, and edu-

cation. Clearly these students, faculty, administrators, and community members are joining together around important community and academic agendas.

This work in public service has opened up the exciting concept of an auxiliary or co-curricular transcript, such as those used at Rollins College and Bradford College, to place the civic and social activities within a larger academic framework. This somewhat new idea (Alverno College has been a leader in promoting a similar concept, values-based education, for almost two decades) asserts that grades reflect only a small part of a student's record of academic accomplishment. Articulating clearly the competencies that students can bring to a work situation expands our views of higher education and links civic and social awareness with professional achievement.

The influence of the Ford Foundation over the past decade in support of the changes in our society and on our campuses is reflected in the writings and accomplishments of a project the foundation helped fund—the American Commitments Project of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U).

The opening paragraphs in the AAC&U monograph *Liberal Learning and the Art of Connection for the New Academy* assert: "Around the country those who see integral connections between the future of higher education and the future of our society have been calling on the academy to reinvent itself....An old era is coming to a close; a new vision of the intimate connections between higher learning and the quality of human community is coming clearly into focus."

AAC&U has framed this new vision as a "renewal of educational commitments" that allow "a democracy 'still in the making' to address historically developed diversities, human differences, relations, and change." The themes of the American Commitments Project include an examination of our ways of knowing and an embracing of "relational pluralism" and of "mutually respectful dialogues among cultures and multiple meaning systems" to promote an active democratic life of engagement and collaboration.

Through dozens of grants to colleges and universities, presentations at regional and national conferences, and publications and public dialogue, AAC&U through its American Commitments Project has promoted the re-envisioning of general education, community service, multiculturalism, and gender studies on hundreds of campuses.

Two colleges have developed service-learning programs with the help of AAC&U grants. At Hobart and William Smith Colleges, students participate in a Community Service House and through their service learn skills of "mediation, conflict resolution, and positive action around issues of interculturalism and pluralism." Pitzer College's social responsibility requirement stipulates that students engage in one semester of community service woven through a course or independent study. In courses such as "Social Responsibility

and Community" or "The Violence of Intimate Relationships," students develop a social/ethical perspective by working as mentors, interns, or aids.

By articulating an educational stance of social responsibility in a pluralistic society; providing grants for curricular and institutional renewal; connecting campuses in mentoring relationships; and continually disseminating the discourse, the conflict, the reshaping of civic knowledge: AAC&U and the Ford Foundation are changing the way we think about our work as faculty, students, administrators, and citizens.

To extend the work of the American Commitments Project, AAC&U—with support from the Ford Foundation—initiated a new project: Community Seminars on Diversity and Democracy. In 1995-96, 20 institutions benefited from the project, receiving support from AAC&U to prepare programs that actively link the college campus with the community. One of these, Pacific University, will conduct six bilingual seminars in Washington County, Oregon, in 1996-97 to bring the Latino and Anglo communities together in dialogue around their mutual interests in heritage, education, social policy, and community responsibility.

By initiating these seminars, Pacific University is taking the lead in strengthening connections among major community constituencies in a county with the fastest-growing Latino population in the nation. These seminars and others at institutions such as Duke University, Evergreen State College, and New York University will help reframe the paradigm of our social/political civic awareness and will model engagement and an active civic life.

This project brings hope, because it will provide hundreds of thousands of participating citizens with opportunities to interact across generations and cultures and to build new bridges to historically undervalued and underrepresented members of the community. In providing these opportunities, American colleges and universities are making a new commitment and issuing a call to what the Kettering Foundation calls a "new citizenship."

The foundation writes: "We commit ourselves to a common citizenship that honors difference and incorporates diversity. From the myriad races, cultures, and communities of interest that are America, we draw shared values not rooted in sameness but in the common ground of our shared tasks and obligations to future generations....Citizenship is a bond that holds potential to unite people of radically diverse backgrounds, ages, and viewpoints. It allows us to enter public life with equal dignity, no matter what our social or economic status." (See box.)

LEADERS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

The thrust of these efforts is, of course, to prepare new, committed leaders for the 21st century. Yet redesigning general education programs, engaging students in learning communities, fostering community service, and rewarding faculty for action research and community service will only enhance civic virtue and social responsibility if students and teachers begin to see themselves not as actors upon others but as "new" leaders: partners, facilitators, enablers, and guides.

If students are to change, then their teachers, mentors, and administrative leaders must adopt and model a different way of working and thinking. Roles and responsibilities for faculty and administrators will have to shift: the boundaries and historic tensions between these two groups will need to move to-

ward a more collaborative perspective on university work and community responsibility.

For all stakeholders, being an engaged university *citizen* will mean facilitating difficult dialogues and forsaking territoriality. It will mean discovering common bases for learning and examining time-worn myths about faculty roles, rewards, and responsibilities. It will mean changing from a paradigm of suspicion and watchfulness to one of trust, forgiveness, and learning. Living and working responsibly teaches civic virtue in the most enduring way.

University presidents who become public intellectuals can provide additional venues for educating a committed citizenry. Presidential support for activities and programs that engage the community with the college and university, or that join university and community goals, creates a shared social vision. Examples abound of academic institutions—like the University of Pennsylvania, Rutgers University, Albion College, The Boston Metropolitan Compact, and Saint Anselm's College—that have worked together with a city or its public schools to address community needs. By participating in these projects, students, faculty, and administrators reframe what it means to be a learner and a citizen. They reframe their careers: they develop their sense of moral justice; and they move across gender, racial, and class boundaries to uncover and celebrate human values of freedom and hope.

Preparing new leaders for a new democracy of engagement and commitment is a complex task, but higher education is stepping forward to take up the challenge. A recent work, *Common Fire: Lives of Commitment in a Complex World*, looks at individuals who have formed and sustained a capacity for civic virtue and social commitment—"servant-leaders," who work for the common good and are nourished by the work of healing themselves and others. (See Daloz *et al.*, in box.)

The authors find that the individuals studied possess in common some critical elements that a liberal education can help students to develop: "The habit of dialogue, the habit of interpersonal perspective-taking...the habit of critical, systemic thought...the habit of dialectical thought...and the habit of holistic thought, the ability to intuit life as an interconnected whole in a way that leads to practical wisdom." Those individuals who had developed these "habits" possessed an ability to see themselves as both individuals and members of a larger community and to shape their lives immediately and contextually.

Olivet College is reframing its direction by focusing its mission, faculty reward structures, and curriculum on civic responsibility. By providing scholarships for students involved in community service and by incorporating a stance toward community involvement into the curriculum at all levels, Olivet is educating proactively for a committed citizenry.

Successful leaders in the 21st century, writes Jean Lipman-Blumen in *The Connective Edge: Leading in an Interdependent World*, will need to be able to engage issues socially and ethically: they will not work alone but in groups, and will not forsake their values and compassion. Authority will not reside in a hero with all-knowing vision: it will need to be constructed, mediated, and lived. It will communicate respect, and it will abide at the boundary of the individual and the global community. By enhancing civic responsibility, colleges and universities have a wonderful opportunity to build leaders for the 21st century. The challenge will remain one of balance, perspective, and optimism. □