

# the role of universities in advancing citizenship and social justice in the 21st century

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## ABSTRACT

This article makes the following claims: (1) the goal for universities should be to contribute *significantly* to developing and sustaining democratic schools, communities, and societies; (2) by working to realize that goal, democratic-minded academics can powerfully help American higher education in particular, and American schooling in general, return to their core mission – effectively educating students to be democratic, creative, caring, constructive citizens of a democratic society. To support those claims, the author provides an historical and contemporary case to illustrate that a democratic mission is the core mission of American higher education. He also identifies Platonization, commodification, and, ‘disciplinary ethnocentrism, tribalism, guildism’, as major obstacles that have helped prevent higher education from realizing its democratic mission. Drawing on two decades of experience he and his colleagues at the University of Pennsylvania have had developing university–community–school partnerships, he proposes a strategy that involves colleges and universities working to solve universal problems (e.g. poverty, inadequate schooling, substandard health care) that are manifested in their local communities. Highlighting the global reach of the university civic responsibility movement, he concludes by calling on democratic-minded academics to work to create university-assisted community schools as a powerful way to help develop democratic students (K-16) and to contribute to the development of democratic schools, universities and societies.

**KEYWORDS** *community schools, democracy, engaged university, John Dewey, undergraduate education, university-assisted community schools*

It is not possible to run a course aright when the goal itself is not rightly placed. – Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum* (1620)

The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point is to *change* it. – Karl Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach* (1845–1846)

In conception, at least, democracy approaches most nearly the ideal of all social organization; that in which the individual and the society are organic to each other. – John Dewey, *The Ethics of Democracy* (1888)

Democracy has been given a mission to the world, and it is of no uncertain character. I wish to show that the university is the prophet of this democracy, as well as its priest and its philosopher; that in other words, the university is the Messiah of the democracy, its to-be-expected deliverer. – William Rainey Harper, *The University and Democracy* (1899)

## introduction

What constitutes a good American university and how should it function? To answer these questions most convincingly, I think it necessary to first respond to a fundamental question: What are American universities good for?

In a 2003 essay on ‘The Idea of a University’, the president of Columbia University, Lee Bollinger, answered that question in the following way:

There are many reasons why [Americans] universities have endured the test of time, but a few are fundamental. Foremost is the purpose they serve. Universities remain meaningful because they respond to the deepest of human needs, to the desire to understand and to explain that understanding to others. A spirited curiosity, coupled with a caring about others (the essence of what we call humanism) is a simple and unquenchable human drive, certainly as profound an element of human nature as the more often cited interests in property and power, around which we organize the economic and political systems. (Bollinger, 2003)

I respectfully disagree with President Bollinger’s essentially idealist theory of the function of universities. Rather than primarily satisfying ‘a spirited curiosity’, I argue for the real world problem-solving, action-oriented, proposition Karl Marx asserted in his 11th thesis on Feuerbach (quoted above in our second epigraph). In effect, for Marx the most profound, unquenchable ‘human drive’ is not *curiosity* about the world but the innate materialist *need* – and therefore drive – to change it for the better; to create, maintain, and continually develop the Good Society that would enable human beings to lead long, healthy, active, peaceful, virtuous, happy lives (Marx, 170: 123).<sup>1</sup> Although this article focuses on research universities – and particularly on my experience at the University of Pennsylvania – I contend that liberal arts institutions, state colleges and community colleges in the USA alike share this noble purpose – as do higher educational institutions throughout the world. To accept my version of Marx’s general proposition, and apply it to institutions of higher learning, poses two basic problems: What is the Good Society and what is the primary agency

which can bring it into existence? To help solve those problems, I follow leads provided by John Dewey and the first president of the University of Chicago, William Rainey Harper.

In 1888, directly challenging the antidemocratic political philosophy expounded in 'Sir Henry Maine's remarkable book on *Popular Government*', Dewey claimed that:

In conception, at least, democracy approaches most nearly the ideal of all social organization, that in which the individual and society are organic to each other. For this reason democracy, so far as it is really democracy, is the most stable, not the most insecure of governments. In every other form of government there are individuals who are not organs of the common will, who are outside of the political society in which they live, and are in effect, aliens to that which should be their own commonwealth. Not participating in the formation or expression of the common will, they do not embody it in themselves. Having no share in society, society has none in them. (Dewey, 1969: 237-8)

A decade after Dewey identified participatory democracy as the Good Society, William Rainey Harper passionately identified the new urban university as the strategic agency to bring it about.

The university, I contend, is this prophet of democracy – *the agency established by heaven itself to proclaim the principles of democracy*. It is in the university that the best opportunity is afforded to investigate the movements of the past and to present the facts and principles involved before the public. It is the university that, as the center of thought, is to maintain for democracy the unity so essential for its success. *The university is the prophetic school out of which come the teachers who are to lead democracy in the true path*. It is the university that must guide democracy into the new fields of arts and literature and science. It is the university that fights the battles of democracy, its war-cry being: 'Come, let us reason together.' It is the university that, in these latter days, goes forth with buoyant spirit to comfort and give help to those who are downcast, *taking up its dwelling in the very midst of squalor and distress*. It is the university that, with impartial judgment, condemns in democracy the spirit of corruption, which now and again lifts up its head, and brings scandal upon democracy's fair name . . . . The university, I maintain, is the prophetic interpreter of democracy; the prophet of her past, in all its vicissitudes; the prophet of her present, in all its complexity; *the prophet of her future, in all its possibilities*. (Harper, 1905: 19-20, emphasis added)

As the quotation demonstrates, long before Clark Kerr hailed the post-World War II American 'multiversity' as the most important institutional innovation of the mid-20th century, Harper, in effect, viewed the new type of urban Great University (his term) which he struggled to develop in Chicago as theoretically the strategic organizational innovation of modern society. Given that theory, he understandably placed great importance upon his university's active engagement with the severe problems confronting its dynamically growing city, particularly its public school system. Moreover, by taking an active role in grappling with the city's problems, among numerous other benefits, Harper

hoped to gain enthusiastic support for his new university from wealthy Chicago elites, especially those highly interested in improving the city's public schools. What might be called Harper's institutional pragmatism, therefore, was highly compatible with, indeed powerfully reinforced, his theoretical conviction that collaborative, action-oriented, real world problem-solving was by far the best strategy to advance knowledge and learning.

According to Harper's theory of democracy in industrial societies, the schooling system functions as the leading societal subsystem. Its continuing development *and effective integration at all levels* (elementary to university) is mandatory to produce significant democratic progress. Given his messianic philosophy, activist temperament, extraordinary organizational skills and experience, given his societal theory and the strategic location of the city of Chicago in the Midwestern communication system and economy, Harper worked tirelessly to make the university of that 'central city' function as the dynamic hub of a highly integrated network of Midwestern schools, academies, and colleges dedicated to fulfilling democracy's 'mission to the world'.<sup>2</sup>

For example, when criticized by a university trustee for sponsoring a journal focused on pedagogy in precollegiate schools, Harper passionately defended such engagement and proclaimed: 'As a university we are interested above all else in pedagogy'. Harper's devotion to pedagogy logically derived from two propositions central to his vision for the University of Chicago in particular and American universities in general.

- (1) 'Education is the basis of all democratic progress. The problems of education are, therefore, the problems of democracy.'
- (2) More than any other institution, the university determines the character of the overall schooling system. To quote rather than paraphrase Harper:

Through the school system, the character of which, in spite of itself, the university determines and in a large measure controls . . . through the school system every family in this entire broad land of ours is brought into touch with the university; for from it proceeds the teachers, or the teacher's teachers. (1905: 25)

Given those two propositions and the role Harper assigned the American University as the Messiah, the 'to-be-expected deliverer' of American democracy, he theorized that the major responsibility of American universities was the performance of the overall American schooling system. If the schooling system does not powerfully accelerate social justice and democratic progress, then American universities must be performing poorly – no matter whatever else they are doing successfully. 'By their [democratic] fruits shall ye know them', was the pragmatic, Francis Baconian, *performance test* which Harper prescribed for the American university system.

Though Harper theorized that the major responsibility of American universities was to improve the performance of the overall American schooling

system, except in very general terms, he failed to specify how universities might fulfill that responsibility – how they could concretely advance democracy. In this article, I am calling for a Baconian-inspired strategy for the development and advancement of a comprehensive approach to university and school change. To Bacon, the first principle for progress is 'know thy goals'. As Bacon wrote in 1620: 'It is not possible to run a course aright when the goal itself is not rightly placed' (Benson, 1978: 427–41). The goal for universities, I believe, should be to contribute *significantly* to developing and sustaining democratic schools, communities and societies. By working to realize that goal, democratic-minded academics, I further believe, can powerfully help American higher education in particular, and American schooling in general, return to their core mission – effectively educating students to be democratic, creative, caring, constructive citizens of a democratic society.

Given the position outlined above, I have to do three things to give credence to my argument:

- (1) Demonstrate that a democratic mission is the core mission of American higher education.
- (2) Identify the obstacles that have helped prevent higher education from realizing its democratic mission.
- (3) Propose a practical strategy by which democratic-minded academics can help reduce those obstacles, help higher education realize its democratic mission to educate students for democratic citizenship, and help create a fair, decent and just society.

## democratic mission as core mission

If America is to fulfill the democratic promise of America for all Americans, it needs to be a nation comprised of individuals with an 'inclination joined with an ability to serve'. I take the phrase, 'inclination joined with an ability to serve', from that extraordinary patriot, statesman, scientist, educator, scholar and activist Benjamin Franklin. In 1749, Franklin published a pamphlet entitled, 'Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania [sic]' to describe the purposes and curriculum of the 'Academy of Philadelphia', later named the University of Pennsylvania. To quote him more fully:

The idea of what is *true merit*, should also be often presented to youth, explain'd and impress'd on their minds, as consisting in an *Inclination* join'd with an *Ability* to serve Mankind, one's Country, Friends and Family . . . which Ability should be the great *Aim* and + *End* of all Learning.<sup>3</sup>

An inclination joined with an ability to serve was the original rationale for public schools, which were to educate youth for citizenship. Moreover, colonial colleges were founded with service as a central aim. While Franklin founded

Penn as a secular institution to educate students in a variety of fields, the other colonial colleges were largely created to educate ministers and religiously orthodox men capable of creating good communities built on religious denominational principles. Specifically, Harvard (Congregationalist), William and Mary (Anglican), Yale (Congregationalist), Princeton (Presbyterian), Columbia (Anglican), Brown (Baptist), Rutgers (Dutch Reformed), Dartmouth (Congregationalist) were all created with religiously based service as a central purpose.

Service to society, fulfilling America's democratic mission, was the founding purpose of the land-grant universities. Established by the Morrill Act of 1862, land grant colleges and universities were designed to spread education, advance democracy and improve the mechanical, agricultural and military sciences. The spirit of the Morrill Act was perhaps best expressed at the University of Wisconsin, which at the turn of the century designed programs around the educational needs of adult citizens across the state.

In 1912, Charles McCarthy, a graduate of the University of Wisconsin and the first legislative reference librarian in the USA, coined the phrase 'The Wisconsin Idea' to describe a concept that had been in practice for a number of years. The Wisconsin Idea began its 'take off phase' in 1903 when Charles Van Hise became president of the University of Wisconsin and joined forces with his former classmate, Governor Robert La Follette, to make 'the boundaries of the university . . . the boundaries of the state.' When asked what accounted for the great progressive reforms that spread across the Midwest in the first two decades of the 20th century, Charles McCarthy replied, 'a combination of soil and seminar' (Stark, n.d.: 2-3). McCarthy's answer captures the essence of the Wisconsin Idea – focusing academic resources on improving the life of the farmer and the lives of citizens across the entire state (Fitzpatrick, 1944; McCarthy, 1912; Rudolph, 1962; Stark, n.d.; Veysey, 1970).

The urban research universities founded in the late 19th century also made service their central goal. In 1876, Daniel Coit Gilman, in his inaugural address as the first president of Johns Hopkins, America's first modern research university, expressed the hope that universities should 'make for less misery among the poor, less ignorance in the schools, less bigotry in the temple, less suffering in the hospitals, less fraud in business, less folly in politics' (Long, 1992: 119). Following Gilman's lead, the abiding belief in the democratic purposes of the American research university echoed throughout higher education at the turn of the 20th century. As we noted above, in 1899 the University of Chicago's first president, William Rainey Harper, (1905: 12) characterized the university as the 'prophet of democracy' and its 'to-be-expected deliverer'. And in 1908, Charles W. Eliot, the president of Harvard proclaimed: 'At bottom most of the American institutions of higher education are filled with the democratic spirit of serviceableness. Teachers and students alike are

profoundly moved by the desire to serve the democratic community' (Veysey, 1965: 119).

Simply put, the democratic mission served as *the* central mission for the development of the American research university, including both land-grant institutions *and* urban universities, such as Hopkins, Chicago, Columbia and Penn. As political scientist Charles Anderson (1993: 7–8) observed in *Prescribing the Life of the Mind*:

With deliberate defiance, those who created the American university (particularly the public university, though the commitment soon spread throughout the system) simply stood this [essentially aristocratic] idea of reason on its head. Now it was assumed that the widespread exercise of self-conscious, critical reason was essential to *democracy* [original emphasis]. *The truly remarkable belief arose that this system of government would flourish best if citizens would generally adopt the habits of thought hitherto supposed appropriate mainly for scholars and scientist* [emphasis added]. We vastly expanded access to higher education. We presumed it a general good, like transport, or power, part of the infrastructure of the civilization.

History is not the only useful guide to help us determine whether the democratic mission should be the primary mission of American higher education. Alexander Astin's discussion of the 'public pronouncements that US colleges and universities make in their catalogues and mission statements' is also helpful. Astin observed that:

In many ways, these sometimes lofty statements come as close as anything to Dewey's conception of the proper role of education in society. If we were to study the mission statements of a randomly selected group of US higher education institutions, we would seldom, if ever, find any mention of private economic benefits, international competitiveness, or filling slots in the labor market. On the contrary, when it comes to describing its educational mission, the typical college or university will use language such as 'preparing students for responsible citizenship,' 'developing character,' 'developing future leaders,' 'preparing students to serve society,' and so forth. In other words, if we are to believe our own rhetoric, those of us who work in the academy see ourselves as *serving the society and promoting and strengthening our particular form of democratic self-government*. (1997: 210–11, emphasis added)

American higher education in general, despite having made visible progress in recent years, has, in my judgment, very far to go before it actually fulfills its historic public purposes. In her 2001 study for the Grantmaker Forum on National and Community Service, Cynthia Gibson noted that when it comes to civic engagement, higher education's rhetoric far exceeds its performance. Weaving together her own words, with those of Barry Checkoway and Kevin Mattson, Gibson observed:

Other higher education leaders have echoed Derek Bok's concern that universities are disassociated with the civic missions on which they were founded – missions that assumed responsibility for preparing students for active participation in a

democratic society and developing students' knowledge for the improvement of communities. Currently, it is 'hard to find top administrators with consistent commitment to this mission; few faculty members consider it central to their role, and community groups that approach the university for assistance often find it difficult to get what they need.' In short, the university has primarily become 'a place for professors to get tenured and students to get credentialed'. (Gibson, 2001: 11)

How far higher education *is* from where it *should* be is also evident in the parlous state of democracy on campus (exemplified by the hierarchical, elitist, competitive culture that pervades the academy), the state of the communities in which our institutions are located, and the state of American democracy itself.

## **obstacles to the realization of higher education's democratic mission**

Why has American higher education failed to realize its democratic mission to democratize higher education, schooling and society? Summarily stated, the forces of Platonization, commodification, and disciplinary ethnocentrism, tribalism, and guildism prevent them from translating democratic mission into democratic practice.

### **platonization**

Plato's elitist, idealist theory of schooling has incalculable day-to-day effects on education and society. In part, the extraordinary effect of Plato's antidemocratic, idealist theory on American democracy can be explained by John Dewey's failure to translate his own ideas into practical action.

Plato was the philosopher Dewey most liked to read. Though he admired Plato, their worldviews differed radically. Plato's worldview was aristocratic and contemplative; Dewey's was democratic and activist. Despite their many differences, in certain crucial respects Dewey shared Plato's views about the relationships between education and society. Like the ancient Greek philosopher, Dewey theorized that education and society were dynamically interactive and interdependent. Plato's philosophy of education aimed to achieve aristocratic order; Dewey's to achieve democratic community. For Dewey it followed, then, that if human beings hope to develop and maintain a participatory democratic society, they must develop and maintain a participatory democratic schooling system.

Ironically, in direct contrast to Plato who pragmatically created a remarkably influential Academy to implement his aristocratic philosophy of education and society, the philosophical activist Dewey failed to work to institutionalize his democratic philosophy of education and society, except by 'lay



preaching'. That is, despite the powerful example of Plato's Academy – an Academy whose elitist, idealist, philosophy *continues to dominate Western schooling systems to this day* – Dewey flagrantly violated his own general theory of thinking and action. Oversimplify stated, Plato's idealist theory of education, his corollary theory of knowledge, that is the great superiority of elegant 'pure theory' and 'pure science' compared to 'inferior' real world practice, as well as his elitist theory of governance, are deeply embedded in the culture and structure of American colleges and universities (Benson and Harkavy, 2000: 174–96).

The dead hand of Plato continues to shape American higher education and through American higher education it shapes the entire schooling system. The development of genuinely democratic community-higher education partnerships through democratic, collaborative, community problem solving, I contend, can be an effective strategy to release the vise-like grip of Plato's dead hand (Harkavy and Benson, 1998: 11–19). 'Overthrowing' Plato, however, would only achieve a partial victory. A clear and present danger to the democratic mission of higher education and to American democracy in general also comes from the forces of commodification (education for profit, students as customers, syllabi as content, academics as superstars). It is worth emphasizing that these forces, although particularly pernicious at this time, were alive and well at the very birth of the colonial college.

## **commodification**

More than an ethic of religious-inspired service inspired the colonial colleges. They also constituted a significant form of community competition. Colleges, it was anticipated, would bring more than religious and educational benefits to a local community, they would bring economic (and a wide variety of other) benefits. The Brown brothers of Providence, Rhode Island provide a particularly clear statement of anticipated economic benefits. Appealing for support to 'businessmen of Providence and . . . surrounding towns', they promised that:

Building the college here will be the means of bringing great quantities of money into the place, and thereby greatly increasing the markets for all kinds of the country's produce, and consequently increasing the value of estates to which this town is a market. (Cochran, 1972: 35)<sup>4</sup>

Succinctly stated, contradictory capitalist market motives, not simply traditional medieval Christian motives, inspired and shaped the contradictory origins and increasingly contradictory development of the American higher educational system.

To systematically discuss the history of commodification in American higher education would require much more time than I have been allotted. I merely note, therefore, that it was the Cold War and its extraordinarily complex

consequences, direct and indirect, short term and long term, that 'redefined American science' and accelerated and deepened the commodification of American universities in powerful and, in my judgment, deeply disturbing ways.

To place that highly complex development in historical perspective, I cite Stuart Leslie's analysis that, during World War II, to a far greater extent than during World War I, universities had:

won a substantial share of the funds [going into wartime mobilization], with research and development contracts that actually dwarfed those of the largest industrial contractors . . . . Vannevar Bush, the chief architect of wartime science policy and a strong advocate of university research, was the man behind the change. (1993: 6)

Bush engineered that change as director of the powerful wartime Office of Scientific Research and Development. Late in 1944, President Roosevelt, highly impressed by its accomplishments, asked Bush to draft a long-term plan for postwar science. Bush delivered his famous report, *Science, the Endless Frontier*, in 1945. General agreement exists that, since 1945, it has profoundly influenced America's science policy. For my purposes, the chief importance of Bush's 'Basic Science Manifesto' (my term for it) is that it rapidly produced what Lee Benson and I have previously characterized as the Big Science, Cold War, Entrepreneurial, Commodified, American Research University System. Derek Bok (2003) brilliantly stigmatized this development in his book, *Universities in the Marketplace*, as the 'commercialization of higher education'.

Perhaps the most important consequence of the commercialization of higher education is the devastating effect that it has on the values and ambitions of college students. When universities openly and increasingly pursue commercialization, it powerfully legitimizes and reinforces the pursuit of economic self-interest by students and contributes to the widespread sense among them that they are in college solely to gain career skills and credentials. It would only belabor the argument to comment further on how student idealism is even more sharply diminished, student disengagement is even more sharply increased, when students see their universities abandon academic values and scholarly pursuits to openly, enthusiastically function as entrepreneurial, ferociously competitive, profit-making corporations.

## **disciplinary ethnocentrism, tribalism, guildism<sup>5</sup>**

Disciplinary ethnocentrism, tribalism, guildism strongly dominate American universities today and strongly work against their actually doing what they rhetorically promise to do. The famous postmodern literary theorist Stanley Fish pontifically provides us with a marvelous case in point. In his monthly column in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Dean Fish (he recently retired as

Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Illinois at Chicago) caustically attacked:

the authors of a recent book [Anne Colby and Thomas Ehrlich], *Educating Citizens: Preparing America's Undergraduates for Lives of Moral and Civic Responsibility* (Jossey-Bass 2003). A product of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the volume reports on a *failure that I find heartening*. (Fish, 2003: C5, emphasis added)

What precisely is the failure? The failure is that, according to the authors of *Educating Citizens*, undergraduate education now does not provide 'the kind of learning [college] graduates need to be involved and responsible citizens . . .'. Why was that failure 'heartening' to the Dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Illinois at Chicago? Because, he insisted unequivocally, professors cannot possibly provide that kind of learning nor should they attempt it. Their job is simply to teach what their discipline calls for them to teach and to try to make their students into good disciplinary researchers. Professors cannot make their students '*into good people and . . . shouldn't try*'. Indeed, for Fish, 'emphasis on broader goals and especially on the therapeutic goal of "personal development" can make it difficult to interest students in *the disciplinary training it is our job to provide*' (Fish, 2003: C5, emphases added).

In effect, Dean Fish not only called on American academics to repudiate John Dewey and his democratic adherents, he called on them to repudiate Plato and his antidemocratic elitist adherents. Since Plato's philosophy of education, like Dewey's, gives its highest priority to making good citizens, according to the Fish doctrine of professorial responsibility, they both were completely wrong. As teachers, the only duty of professors is to teach their discipline; it emphatically does not require or permit them to try to make their students 'into good people'.

In a perverse way, Dean Fish's caustic attack on the authors of *Educating Citizens* actually performed a valuable function. It splendidly illuminated what might be called the *disciplinary fallacy* afflicting American universities; namely, the fallacy that professors are duty-bound only to serve the scholastic interests and preoccupations of their disciplines and have neither the responsibility nor the capacity to help their universities keep their longstanding promises to prepare 'America's Undergraduates for Lives of Moral and Civic Responsibility'. In effect, Dean Fish baldly asserted what most professors now believe and practice but strongly tend not to admit openly. This belief and practice also strongly tends to produce disciplinary isolation and what has been stigmatized as 'siloization' which strongly inhibits the interdisciplinary cooperation and integrated specialization necessary to solve significant, highly complex, real-world problems.<sup>6</sup>

## toward a strategy to help higher education practically realize its democratic mission

Having briefly – and perhaps over simply – identified the obstacles that prevent higher education from realizing its democratic mission, I turn now to the really hard, really significant, question. What is to be done to release higher education from the dead hand of Plato and the live hands of commodification and the disciplinary fallacy? More specifically, what is a practical strategy that would help American higher education overthrow Plato and institute Dewey, reject commodification and disciplinary guildism, and practically realize its democratic mission? In my view, the first step is to clarify and even redefine the purpose of undergraduate education.

### refocusing the ends of undergraduate education

In the foreword to *Educating Citizens*, Lee Shulman, President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (the book's publisher) emphasized the critically important role colleges play in the development of the virtues and understanding vital for democratic citizenship. Observing that a democratic society required an 'educated citizenry blessed with virtue as well as wisdom', Shulman hailed the book's demonstration that achieving the requisite:

combination of moral and civic virtue accompanied by the development of understanding occurs best when fostered by our institutions of higher education. It does not occur by accident, or strictly through early experience. Indeed, I argue that there may well be a critical period for the development of these virtues, and that period could be the college years. During this developmental period, defined as much by educational opportunity as by age, students of all ages *develop the resources needed for their continuing journeys through adult life*. (2003: viii, emphasis added)

Shulman's astute observation helps us see the critically important role that, in a wide variety of ways, colleges play in the lifelong, all-encompassing development of all the different types of personnel who, *directly and indirectly*, control and operate the American schooling system. If their critically formative years at college neither contribute to their own development as democratic citizens nor concretely demonstrates to them how schools can function to produce democratic citizens, *they will necessarily reproduce what they have learned* – more precisely, failed to learn in college. As a result of that disastrously flawed reproductive process, the schooling system will be incapable of developing an effective program for democratic citizenship. Put another way, I agree with Lee Schulman that American colleges constitute the strategically important component of American universities when the goal is to help develop an American schooling system capable of producing students who possess the set

of attributes they must possess to function as democratic citizens. But what might impel our universities to embrace this goal actively as well as rhetorically?

## **shame and cognitive dissonance**

For many years Lee Benson and I have argued that the immoral state of America's cities and the enlightened self-interest of colleges and universities would lead higher education to embrace significant partnerships with their communities (Benson and Harkavy, 1991, 1992, 2000, 2002; Harkavy, 1996, 1997, 1999, 2000; Harkavy and Puckett, 1994). More significantly, we argued that the increasingly obvious, increasingly immoral, contradiction between the increasing status, wealth and power of American universities – particularly elite research universities – and the increasingly pathological state of a great many American cities would *shame* them into taking action to reduce the contradiction. In addition, we argued that universities would not only be pressured by external agencies (e.g. federal and state governments) to work hard to improve the quality of their local schools and communities but would increasingly recognize that it was in their own enlightened self-interest to do that. It has recently become clear to us, however, that we seriously underestimated the ability of universities to effectively resist making substantive changes of the kind many academics have been advocating since the 1980s. Probably the main form of resistance has been for universities to make eloquent rhetorical pledges of support for 'community engagement' and then fail to put 'their money (and other necessary resources) where their mouth is'.

Aside from deploring it, what can practically be done to overcome or reduce that hypocritical form of university resistance to change? That's the problem. What's the solution? Part of the solution, we believe, is to follow Derek Bok's (2003) lead in *Universities in the Marketplace* and apply the powerful social psychological theory of *cognitive dissonance*. President Bok did not explicitly cite that theory. But he *used* it with devastating effect in his book length demonstration that 'the commercialization of higher education' not only fundamentally contradicts traditional 'academic standards and institutional integrity' but, in a 'process [which] may be irreversible', threatens to sacrifice 'essential values that are all but impossible to restore' (2003: 208).

In *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (1957) Leon Festinger published in book form the theory that became one of the most influential theories in social psychology. Summarized in oversimplified form, the theory focuses on 'the feeling of psychological discomfort produced by the combined presence of two thoughts that do not follow from one another (e.g. smokers who agree that smoking is very unhealthy but continue to smoke). Festinger proposed that

the greater the discomfort, the greater the desire to reduce the dissonance of the two cognitive elements' (Harmon-Jones and Mills, 1999: cover blurb).

In *Universities in the Marketplace*, President Bok clearly wanted to produce such great discomfort among university administrators and faculty members who either engaged in commercial activities or tolerated them that they would feel compelled to change their behavior. In similar fashion, the egalitarian values proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence have long been invoked in American history to produce the cognitive dissonance and great discomfort indispensable to 'agitators' who wanted to abolish slavery, win equal rights for women, overcome segregation and achieve similar egalitarian goals.

Learning from history and following President Bok's lead, this article is designed to support the campaign he began – to shame universities into translating their democratic rhetoric into practical action. Taking a leaf from Lincoln Steffen's (1957) famous muckraking work on *The Shame of the Cities*, as we see it, that campaign, in effect, tries to overcome 'The shame of the universities'. A highly effective way to conduct the campaign, I believe, would make use of Alexander Astin's powerful essay, 'Liberal education and democracy: The case for pragmatism'.

In effect, like Derek Bok, Astin skillfully used the theory of cognitive dissonance to develop a devastating critique of the hypocrisy of universities that rhetorically proclaim that their mission is to help their students become responsible democratic citizens and then do almost nothing *positive* to realize that mission. In fact, as Astin (1997: 221) observed, by their antidemocratic organization and functioning, 'by their obvious preoccupation with enhancing [their] resources and reputations' and in a variety of other ways, universities strongly contribute to their students accepting the 'values of materialism, competitiveness, and individualism'. Guided by cognitive dissonance theory and American history (and the history of other countries' reforms and revolutions), I am convinced that a sustained, massive, many-sided campaign to expose and denounce university hypocrisy can produce sufficient 'great discomfort' to *help* change American university behavior for the better. But in itself such a campaign will not bring about the radical changes we support. A comprehensive strategy to bring those changes about needs additional prongs, two of which we briefly describe below.

## **act locally**

In her edited volume, *Building Partnerships for Service-Learning*, Barbara Jacoby (2003) and her colleagues emphasize that creating effective, democratic, mutually-beneficial, mutually-respectful partnerships should be a primary, if not the primary, goal for service-learning in the first decades of the 21st century. Jacoby calls on colleges and universities to focus their attention on

improving democracy and the quality of life in their local communities. Here Jacoby is echoing one of John Dewey's most significant propositions; 'Democracy must begin at home, and its home is the neighborly community' (1954 [1927]: 213). Democracy, Dewey emphasized, has to be built on face-to-face interactions in which human beings work together cooperatively to solve the ongoing problems of life. In effect, Jacoby and colleagues have updated Dewey and advocated this proposition: Democracy must begin at home, and its home is the engaged neighborly college or university and its local community partner.

The benefits of a local community focus for college and university problem solving courses and programs are manifold. Ongoing, continuous interaction is facilitated through work in an easily accessible local setting. Relationships of trust, so essential for effective partnerships and effective learning, are also built through day-to-day work on problems and issues of mutual concern. In addition, the local community also provides a convenient setting in which a number of a community problem solving courses based in different disciplines can work together on a complex problem to produce substantive results. Work in a college or university's local community, since it facilitates interaction across schools and disciplines, can create interdisciplinary learning opportunities. And finally, the local community is a real world site in which community members and academics can pragmatically determine whether the work is making a real difference, whether *both* the neighborhood and the institution are better as a result of common efforts.

### **focus on significant, community-based, real world problems**

To Dewey, knowledge and learning are most effective when human beings work collaboratively to solve specific, strategic, real world problems. 'Thinking', he wrote (1990a [1910]: 11), 'begins in . . . a *forked road* situation, a situation which is ambiguous, which presents a dilemma, which poses alternatives'. A focus on universal problems (such as poverty, unequal health care, substandard housing, hunger, and inadequate, unequal education) that manifest themselves locally are, in my judgment, the best way to apply Dewey's brilliant proposition in practice. To support the argument, I turn to the example I know best, Penn's work with its local ecological community, West Philadelphia. The example reveals that not only is the act of learning transformed through such efforts, but grappling with significant, local problems also has the capacity to begin mending a fractured academic community because the very enterprise depends upon the participation of a multiplicity of faculty and administrators from across the university.

## **university-assisted community schools as one practical means to achieve the utopian goal of developing truly democratic students, K-16**

Since 1985, Lee Benson and I have been engaged in an increasingly complex project to help develop university-assisted community schools in West Philadelphia, the section of Philadelphia in which the University of Pennsylvania is located. Committed to undergraduate teaching, convinced by our personal experiences during the 1960s that undergraduates might function as catalytic agents to help bring about university change, we designed an Honors Seminar which aimed to stimulate undergraduates to think critically about what Penn should do to remedy the rapid deterioration of West Philadelphia – a development which had devastating consequences for the university. The seminar's title suggests its general concerns: 'Urban university–community relationships: Penn-West Philadelphia, past, present and future, as a case study'.

As the seminar was originally conceived, its students would be given the general assignment of developing a research project focused on some problem that adversely affected the quality of life in West Philadelphia. In a relatively short time, however, after the seminar actually began operations, it became clear that the best strategy was to have students concentrate their work on helping to solve one highly critical problem – the problem of developing *university-assisted community schools*. In sharp contrast to traditional neighborhood schools, Benson and I conceived the idea that university-assisted community schools should be developed which would educate, engage, activate, and *serve all members of the community in which a school is located*. Put another way, in the course of the seminar's work it developed a strategy based on this proposition: Universities can best help improve their local environment if they mobilize and integrate their great resources, particularly the 'human capital' embodied in their students, to help develop and maintain *community schools* which function as focal points to help create healthy urban environments.

Somewhat more specifically, the strategy developed in the course of the seminar's work assumed that, like institutions of higher education, public schools can function as environment-changing institutions and can become the strategic centers of broad-based partnerships that genuinely engage a wide variety of community organizations and institutions. Public schools 'belong' to all members of the community. They are particularly well suited, therefore, to function as neighborhood 'hubs' or 'nodes' or 'centers' around which productive local partnerships can be generated and formed. When public schools play that role, they function as community institutions *par excellence*; they then provide a decentralized, democratic, community-based effective response to



significant community problems and help develop the democratic, cosmopolitan, neighborly communities John Dewey envisioned.

The university-assisted community school, of course, essentially reinvents and updates an old American idea, namely that the neighborhood school can effectively serve as the core neighborhood institution – the core institution that provides comprehensive services and galvanizes other community institutions and groups. But by their very nature, community schools engage in far more activities and serve far wider constituencies than do traditional neighborhood schools. To do all that successfully, however, a community school serving a specific neighborhood requires far more resources (broadly conceived) than does a traditional school serving the same neighborhood. Where would those resources come from?

Once that problem was recognized, the community service and service-learning that students had been performing in West Philadelphia schools helped us see that the solution was to really mobilize the great resource of universities like Penn to assist the transformation of traditional neighborhood schools into innovative community schools. And once that was seen, the concept of university-assisted community schools followed logically. From then on, our seminar concentrated on helping to develop and implement that concept in real world practice. In effect, the highly complex problem that the seminar concentrated on solving became the problem of effectively mobilizing *and integrating* Penn's great resources to help transform the *traditional public schools* of West Philadelphia into *innovative community schools*.

Over time, as students continually worked to develop and implement the concept and theory of university-assisted community schools, the seminar increasingly developed and implemented an innovative learning and research program. Summarized succinctly, the program is based on collaborative, action-oriented, community problem-solving which provided both Penn students and students in West Philadelphia schools 'with a real motive behind and a real outcome ahead' (to quote John Dewey's [1990b: 12] powerful proposition about the conditions most likely to permit effective learning to take place).

Observing the work of our students and the students in West Philadelphia community schools over a number of years led Benson and me to develop a critically important principle which has guided our thinking and practice in a wide variety of ways and situations. That principle can be formulated as follows:

At all levels (K to 16 and above), collaborative, community-based, community action-oriented, learning projects which innovatively and effectively depart from customary teacher-dominated school routines permit and stimulate both teachers and students to participate democratically in school and classroom governance and functioning. Put another way, a generally agreed-upon, action-oriented, community problem-solving school innovation tends to stimulate and permit

teachers and students to initiate and practice school and classroom democracy. Put still another way, the principle can be summarized as follows: Collaborative, action-oriented, community-based, effective, innovative, problem-solving projects create spaces in which school and classroom democracy can grow and flourish.

In my judgment, that general principle can powerfully help inspire and develop effective programs for democratic citizenship and social justice in a wide variety of schools (at all levels) and communities. It warrants careful consideration, I believe, by everyone engaged in trying to solve the complex problems inherent in education for democratic citizenship.

Space restrictions prevent me from giving a detailed account of how, over time, the seminar's increasingly successful work stimulated development of an accelerating number of 'academically-based community services' courses in a wide range of Penn schools and departments. (For historical reasons peculiar to Penn, 'academically-based community service' is the term it uses for what elsewhere is called 'service-learning'.)<sup>7</sup> For our present purposes, we need only note that, encouraged by the success of Penn's increasing engagement with West Philadelphia, in July 1992, the president of the university, Sheldon Hackney, created the Center for Community Partnerships. To highlight the importance he attached to the Center, he located it in the Office of the President and appointed me to be its director (while continuing to serve as director of the Penn Program for Public Service created in 1988).

Symbolically and practically, creation of the Center constituted a major change in Penn's relationship to West Philadelphia/Philadelphia. The university as a corporate entity now formally committed itself to finding ways to use its truly enormous resources (broadly conceived) to help improve the quality of life in its local community – not only in respect to public schools but to economic and community development in general.

Very broadly conceived, the Center is based on the assumption that one highly efficient way for Penn to carry out its traditional academic missions of advancing universal knowledge and effectively educating students is to function as what we now call an 'engaged democratic cosmopolitan civic university'. Stated somewhat more specifically, Penn's research and teaching would actively focus on solving universal problems, for example schooling, health care, economic development, as those universal problems *manifest themselves locally in West Philadelphia/Philadelphia*. By effectively and efficiently integrating general theory and concrete practice, as Ben Franklin had advocated in the 18th century, Penn would symbiotically improve both the quality of life in its local ecological community *and* the quality of its academic research and teaching. Put another way, the Center is based on the proposition that when Penn is creatively conceived as a community-engaged university, it constitutes in the best sense both a *universal* and a *local* institution of higher education.

The emphasis on partnerships in the Center's name was deliberate; it acknowledged, in effect, that Penn could not try to go it alone, as it had long been (arrogantly) accustomed to do. The creation of the Center was also significant internally. It meant that, at least in principle, the president of the university would now strive to achieve university alignment by strongly encouraging all components of the university to seriously consider the collaborative roles they could appropriately play in Penn's efforts to improve the quality of its off-campus environment. Implementation of that strategy accelerated after Judith Rodin became president of Penn in 1994. A native West Philadelphian and Penn graduate, Rodin was appointed in part because of her deeply felt commitment to improving Penn's local environment and to transforming Penn into the leading American urban university, and strongly supported the work of the Center from the start of her administration.

Having been president for ten years and significantly increased Penn's commitment to engagement with its local community, President Rodin retired in 2004. Amy Guttmann, a highly distinguished political philosopher whose scholarly work focused on the role universities can play in advancing democratic education and democratic societies, succeeded her. Logically enough, therefore, in her inaugural address on 15 October 2004, President Guttmann (2004: 6–7) emphasized that Penn was not 'an ivory tower' and proclaimed a remarkably comprehensive, 'Penn Compact' designed to fulfill the responsibility that universities have 'to serve humanity and society'. Among other far-reaching observations, she noted that:

Through our collaborative engagement with communities all over the world, Penn is poised – and I think uniquely poised – to advance the central values of democracy in a great urban city: life, liberty, opportunity, and mutual respect.

Effective engagement of these values, begins right here at home. We cherish our relations with our neighbors, relationships that have strengthened Penn academically and have strengthened the vitality of West Philadelphia.

Since its creation in 1992, to help solve the complex problems adversely affecting the quality of life in West Philadelphia, the Center has tried to function as an integrating agency to effectively align Penn's numerous schools and departments and bring about their mutually beneficial collaboration. Easier said than done, alas.

Particularly since 1945, Penn, like all American research universities, has increasingly developed an organizational culture and structure that makes competitive fragmentation the norm and interdisciplinary, interschool, collaboration the exception. To reduce competitive fragmentation and increase collaborative alignment, the Center has tried to make use of Muzafer Sherif's 'superordinate goal' theory. Sherif (1958: 349) defined 'superordinate goals' as:

goals which are compelling and highly appealing to members of two or more groups in conflict which cannot be attained by the resources and energies of the groups separately. In effect, they are goals attained only when groups pull together.

Developing solutions to critical, complex, West Philadelphia problems would, of course, directly and indirectly significantly benefit Penn as an institution and would be in the enlightened self-interest of everyone at the university. In principle, therefore, developing such solutions should logically constitute 'goals which are compelling and highly appealing' to almost all members of Penn's multitudinous departments, centers, institutes and schools. In practice, however, the longstanding competitive fragmentation built into Penn's organizational culture and structure has strongly trumped the logic of collaboration and enlightened self-interest. As a result, until recently, attempts to apply Sherif's superordinate goal theory have produced only very limited success.

Though the number and variety of academically-based community service courses at Penn has greatly increased since 1992, they have strongly tended to function independently of each other, even when linking them together would obviously be mutually-beneficial. But a recent development has strengthened the conviction that the Center, by focusing its efforts on complex problems that are both widely recognized as very important and require the effective integration of specialized knowledge and skills, can successfully apply superordinate goal theory to reduce Penn's competitive fragmentation and increase its interdisciplinary, interschool, collaboration.

## **community health care as a complex strategic problem to help bring about 'one university'**

Penn is perhaps the only major American university where all its schools and colleges are located on a contiguous urban campus. In the early 1970s, therefore the newly-appointed president of the university, Martin Meyerson, emphasized the extraordinary intellectual and social benefits that would result if the university took optimum advantage of the ease of interaction that a single campus location provides. To realize those benefits, he called for implementation of a 'One University' organizational realignment – a realignment in which Penn would be characterized by an intellectual collaboration and synergy across departments, divisions, colleges, and schools that would result in powerful advances in knowledge and human welfare.

As I noted above, that kind of radical realignment is much easier said than done. In practice, overcoming Penn's longstanding disciplinary fragmentation and conflict, narrow specialization, bureaucratic barriers, and what Benjamin Franklin (Best, 1962: 173) stigmatized in 1789 as 'ancient Customs and Habitudes', proved enormously difficult to achieve; the One University idea essentially remained an idea, not an action program.

Given the recent recognition, however, that improving the health of urban communities is among the most significant problems confronting American society, it seemed possible to use it to resurrect the One University idea; solutions to the highly complex urban health care problem obviously require inter-school and interdisciplinary collaboration. And that indeed proved to be the case when a school-based community health care project began at a West Philadelphia public school. To make the argument concretely, I describe the project and its wider implications in some detail.

## **conceptualizing and implementing the Sayre community health care project**

In recent years, it has been increasingly recognized that lack of accessible, effective health care is one of the most serious problems affecting poor urban communities. In fact, since Benson and I began work in 1985, community leaders have identified improving health care as a critical need. As a result, beginning in the late 1980s, we have been trying, largely unsuccessfully, to develop a sustainable, comprehensive, effective health care program at local public schools. In the spring and summer of 2002, however, a group of undergraduates in an academically-based community service seminar I directed focused their research and service on helping to solve the health care crisis in West Philadelphia. The students' research and work with the community led them to propose establishment of a health promotion and disease prevention center at a public school in West Philadelphia, the Sayre Middle School.

From their research, the students were well aware that community-oriented primary care projects frequently flounder because of an inability to sustain adequate external funding. They concluded that for a school-based community health care project to be sustained and successful, it had to be built into the curriculum at both the university and the public school. Only then would it gain a degree of permanence and stability over time. They proposed, therefore, creation of a health promotion/disease prevention center at a local school that would serve as a teaching and learning focus for medical, dental, nursing, arts and sciences, social work, education, design and business students. Their proposal proved to be so compelling that it led to the development of a school-based Community Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Center at Sayre Middle School. It is worth noting that one of the undergraduates who developed the Sayre project, Mei Elansary, received the 2003 Howard R. Swearer Humanitarian Award given by Campus Compact (a national coalition of more than 950 college and university presidents committed to the civic purposes of higher education) to students for outstanding public service.

The school-based Community Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Center at Sayre Middle School was formally launched in January of 2003. It

functions as the central component of a university-assisted community school designed both to advance student learning and democratic development and to help strengthen families and institutions within the community. A community school is an ideal location for health care programs; it is not only where children learn but also where community members gather and participate in a variety of activities. Moreover, the multidisciplinary character of the Sayre Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Center enables it to be integrated into the curriculum and co-curriculum of both the public school and the university, assuring an educational focus as well as sustainability for the Sayre Center. In fact, the core of the program is to integrate the activities of the Sayre Center with the educational programs and curricula at both Sayre Middle School and Penn. To that end, Penn faculty and students in Medicine, Nursing, Dentistry, Social Work, and Arts and Sciences, Design, as well as other schools to a lesser extent, now work at Sayre through new and existing courses, internships and research projects. Health promotion and service activities are also integrated into the Sayre students' curriculum. In effect, Sayre students serve as *agents* of health care change in the Sayre neighborhood.

The Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Center at Sayre is connected to a small learning community (SLC) which involves 350 students from grades 6 through 8. In that SLC, health promotion activities are integrated with core subject learning in science, social studies, math, language arts, etc. Ultimately, every curriculum unit will have a community education and/or community problem-solving component (usually this will function as the organizing theme of the unit). Given this approach, Sayre students are not passive recipients of health information. *Instead, they are active deliverers of information and coordination and creative providers of service.*

A considerable number and variety of Penn academically-based community service courses provide the resources and support that make it possible to operate, sustain and develop the Sayre Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Center. Literally hundreds of Penn students (professional, graduate and undergraduate) and dozens of faculty members, from a wide range of Penn schools and departments, work at Sayre. Since they are performing community service while engaged in academic research, teaching and learning, they are simultaneously practicing their specialized skills and developing, to some extent at least, their moral and civic consciousness and democratic character. And since they are engaged in a highly integrated common project, they are also learning how to communicate, interact, and collaborate with each other in wholly unprecedented ways that have measurably broadened their academic horizons and demonstrated to them the real value of working to overcome disciplinary ethnocentrism, tribalism and guildism. Successful concrete real world problem-solving actions speak louder and more convincingly than abstract exhortation.

The Dean of Penn Medicine, Arthur Rubenstein, recognized the extraordinary potential of the Sayre Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Project when he appointed Bennett L. Johnson, Jr, MD to the newly created position of Senior Associate Dean for Diversity and Community Outreach in the School of Medicine. Dr Johnson, a distinguished Professor of Dermatology and the Senior Medical Officer of the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, had played the key role in engaging the Medical School with the Sayre project, recruiting students, residents, house staff and faculty to contribute to various health education and health promotion activities. In the announcement appointing Dr Johnson, Dean Rubenstein (pers. comm. to Ralph Muller 22 December 2004) wrote: ‘... he will build upon our successful community efforts, many of which Dr. Johnson initiated, and work closely with colleagues at the University level to coordinate interactions with community groups and organizations’. It should be noted that I had been advocating for such a position for nearly 13 years. I am convinced that the Sayre Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Project provided the real-world demonstration necessary to convince the Dean and other administrative leaders of the benefits that would accrue to both Penn Medicine and West Philadelphia from creating an office designed to substantially increase and enhance the Medical Center’s work with the community.

In April 2005, the US Department of Health and Human Services informed the Sayre Community Health Advisory Council, a non-profit corporation founded by for the purpose of opening a primary care health center, that its application for approximately US\$1.5 million over three years to support the Sayre School-based Community Health Center (SBCHC) had been approved. The Sayre SBCHC will serve the socio-economically distressed inner-city area surrounding the school, which has been designated both as a Medically Underserved and a Primary Care Health Professions Shortage Area. The target population is the low-income Sayre students and their families. (Over 85 percent of Sayre students come from low-income families.) The goal is to integrate health promotion activities with the school’s educational programs and curricula as part of providing accessible, culturally sensitive services.

It is still early days, of course. But I think that the successful creation and operation of the Sayre Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Project strongly supports the validity of this article’s basic proposition, namely: Universities can significantly help overcome the terribly harmful effects of disciplinary fragmentation and conflict, narrow specialization, bureaucratic barriers, and ‘ancient Customs and Habitudes’, by identifying and actively trying to solve a highly complex, highly significant, real world, local community problem which, by its very nature, requires sustained interschool and interdisciplinary collaboration.

## **the university civic responsibility idea becomes an international movement**

The accelerating positive changes in Penn's relationship to its local schools and community are not atypical, not unique to Penn. More or less similar changes taking place throughout the USA testify to the emergence of a University Civic Responsibility movement – a national movement to construct an organizationally-integrated, optimally democratic schooling system, as the most strategic means to advance American democracy.

A convenient way to suggest the rapid development of that movement during the 1990s and early 2000s is to contrast its relatively flourishing condition today with the devastating indictment against American universities that the President of Harvard University, Derek Bok, presented in 1990. In a major book published that year, President Bok (1990) strongly indicted American universities for failing to do what they should have been doing 'to help our country cope more effectively with a formidable array of problems'. Less than a decade later, however, that condition had clearly changed for the better – although American universities still have a very, very long way to go to do what they could and should do to solve those problems.

On 18–20 June 1998, a national conference on Higher Education and Civic Responsibility was held in Tallahassee, Florida. Co-sponsored by the American Council on Education and Florida State University, the conference brought together leaders from a wide variety of higher education institutions. The conference had two primary purposes:

first, to set the agenda for a new National Forum on Higher Education and Civic Responsibility being initiated by the American Council on Education; and second, to survey the higher education landscape for the best programs involving civic responsibility. The Forum's goals will be to strengthen higher education's civic role both in educating students and institutional service to communities. (Benson and Harkavy, 1999)

The conference was a great success. To build on its success and help develop a coordinated national movement to increase the number of colleges and universities working to interactively improve the quality of life in their local communities and the moral and civic education of their students, the American Council on Education published a book of essays on *Civic Responsibility and Higher Education* (Ehrlich, 2000). Its publication in 2000 constituted a 'hard' indicator of the accelerating growth and development of the idea that universities (broadly conceived, i.e. all institutions of higher education) powerfully advance knowledge and learning when they take significant responsibility for the well being of the local communities in which they constitute highly strategic corporate citizens.

In the Preface to *Civic Responsibility and Higher Education*, its editor, Thomas



Ehrlich (2000: v-vi), observed that it focused on two central questions: (1) What does civic engagement mean? and (2) What can colleges and universities do to promote it? Having posed those questions, Ehrlich then summarized the volume's contents as follows:

The essays in this volume should be of significant interest to everyone troubled about American democracy and its future, as well as about the future of higher education in this country. The authors have written with particular attention to college and university faculty and administrators and what they can do to educate their own students to be responsible citizens. No less important, these essays provide important insights on *how campuses themselves can be engaged citizens of their communities*. But the volume is also written for a larger audience of those concerned about how to reverse the decline of civic engagement in the United States. The authors not only diagnose the reasons why higher education has been primarily on the sidelines during this decline, *but also propose concrete steps to change that reality*. (2000: v-vi, emphasis added)

As that summary suggests, the volume focused on what 'engaged' colleges and universities could do to promote democratic citizenship in America and how they could best function as 'engaged citizens of their communities'. *Civic Responsibility and Higher Education* received highly favorable reviews and significantly accelerated the progress of the nationwide movement for academic engagement. In fact, the movement progressed so rapidly that two major national academic organizations, Campus Compact and the American Council on Education convened a Presidents' Leadership Colloquium in July of 1999 at which 56 college and university presidents signed a 'Presidents' Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education' (see <http://www.compact.org/presidential/declaration.html>). Since that meeting, held in Aspen Colorado, approximately 500 president have joined the initial signatories and endorsed the Declaration, which powerfully proclaims the mission of higher education to advance citizenship and social justice:

Colleges and universities have long embraced a mission to educate students for citizenship. But now, with over two-thirds of recent high school graduates, and ever larger number of adults, enrolling in post secondary studies, higher education has an unprecedented opportunity to influence the democratic knowledge, dispositions, and habits of the heart that graduates [of colleges] carry with them into the public square.

Higher education is uniquely positioned to help Americans understand the histories and contours of our present challenges as a diverse democracy. It is uniquely positioned to help both students and our communities to explore new ways of fulfilling the promise of justice and dignity for all, both our own democracy and as a part of the global community.

We believe that the challenge of the next millennium is the renewal of our own democratic life and reassertion of social stewardship. In celebrating the birth of democracy, we can think of no nobler task than committing ourselves to helping catalyze and lead a national movement to reinvigorate the public purposes and civic mission of higher education. We believe that now and through the next

century, our institutions must be vital agents and architects of a flourishing democracy.

We urge all of higher education to join us.

## **an international academic consortium for the advancement of democracy**

Characterized by the *New York Times* as a 'Vast rally for democracy', a historically significant international conference was held on 26–27 June 2002, in Warsaw, Poland. As though to dramatically symbolize the progress human beings have made in their long march to global democracy, the high-ranking delegates from over one hundred nations met 'in the splendor of . . . [Warsaw's] ancient royal castle' to work 'Toward a community of democracies'.

According to the *Times*' (2000: A29) account, the conference organizers aimed to 'encourage deeper democracy in the world by having countries commit themselves to what is being called the Warsaw Declaration'. Hoping to 'gain the currency of the Helsinki Declaration of 1975', the organizers chose that title to advance the movement for 'deeper democracy' in the world, as the Helsinki Declaration had advanced the movement for 'human rights'.

Predictions are always chancy – especially about the future (sic). But it seems reasonable to predict that the Warsaw Declaration eventually will be viewed as a turning point in the historic movement for global democracy. Whether or not that prediction turns out to be accurate, I think it indisputable that American and European universities increasingly are participating in the emerging movement and collectively constitute perhaps its most strategic components.

In 1999, even before the Warsaw Declaration was proclaimed, a truly unprecedented International Consortium on Higher Education, Civic Responsibility, and Democracy was formed in Strasbourg, France. Convinced that 'institutions of higher education can potentially function as strategic institutions in democratic political development', the Consortium aims to increase their collective capacity to play that role far more effectively than they possibly could have if they acted alone. The Consortium can be briefly described as a joint effort of the Council of Europe and the following US higher educational associations represented on the US Executive Committee of the Consortium: American Association for Higher Education, American Association of Colleges and Universities, American Council on Education and Campus Compact.<sup>8</sup> (In this connection, it is worth emphasizing that Campus Compact, founded in 1985 by three university presidents, has grown exponentially. It now has, as noted above, over 950 institutional members committed to service learning, community engagement, and democratic development.)

To get its collective work underway, the Consortium decided to undertake

a highly-ambitious, consciousness-raising, data-gathering, international research project on 'Universities as Sites of Citizenship and Civic Responsibility'. The Council of Europe's Committee on Higher Education and Research functions as the administrative and operational center of activity for the European phase of the project. It seems appropriate to note that the University of Pennsylvania functions as the organizational center for the American phase, as well as for the research project and the International Consortium as a whole.

Described somewhat more specifically, the project focuses on institutions of higher education as strategic institutions in democratic political and social development. It is conceived as a cross-national study comparing universities in over forty European countries, both new and established democracies, and in the 50 states of the USA. It addresses the actual activities of institutions of higher education that support democratic values and practices; an assessment of their capabilities and dispositions to promote democracy; and dissemination of resources *to improve the contributions of higher education to democracy on the campus, the local community, and society.*

The project is divided into three phases: (1) a pilot study of students, faculty and administrators and their relationship to local governments, schools, businesses, media and civic groups; (2) a survey of the above in a sample of approximately 125 institutions in Europe and a similar number in the USA; and (3) analysis, formulation of recommendations, and distribution of materials that can be used *by institutions of higher education to discuss and decide their responsibilities for civic education and democracy.*

The primary purpose of the first phase, a pilot study, was to design a much larger cross-national comparative research project of universities and colleges as socializing *agents for democratic values and practices among their students and their local communities.* The objective was to map the variety of activities carved out by universities and colleges and to test selected instruments for assessing what is being done and to what effect. The National Science Foundation largely funded the US pilot project; the Council of Europe supported the European pilot project. Now that the pilot study has been successfully completed, funds are being sought to conduct the far more expensive second and third phases of the project. When completed, this will be the first trans-Atlantic empirical study of its kind.

General academic contributions will include: a systemic examination of arguably the core institution shaping democratic development; an empirical basis for developing theories of democratic development in the global era; instruments for assessing, understanding, and increasing the levels of civic responsibility in different societies; an analysis to understand the relationships among higher education, democratic schooling, and democratic societies. A byproduct of this research will be the development of approaches, methodologies and networks for intensive multisite comparative international study

on a range of issues (e.g. health, culture, political socialization, economic development). As evidence of progress, it is worth noting that the Consortium expanded its membership to include Australia, South Africa and South Korea, and is exploring expansion to countries in Asia Africa and Latin America. In fact, in May 2005, I spoke to a meeting of Uruguayan university leaders and senior governmental officials in Uruguay to introduce them to the Consortium. At the conclusion of the meeting, it was agreed to begin discussions designed to result in a national coalition of universities that would join the International Consortium, as well as to work with university leadership across southern Latin America (Argentina, Chile, Brazil and Paraguay) to form a regional association dedicated to university engagement and education for democratic citizenship.

The meeting in Uruguay proved to be particularly well timed. A week before, members of the US Steering Committee met with European colleagues who have taken a lead in the International Consortium. Those in attendance from the USA included the Executive Director of Campus Compact and Vice Presidents from the American Council on Education and the American Association of Colleges and Universities. Henry Teune, the Principal Investigator of the Universities as Sites of Citizenship Project and Professor of Political Science at Penn, two other Penn colleagues – Frank Plantan and Joann Weeks, Executive Director and Administrative Director of the Consortium were among the other US colleagues in attendance. I also attended as co-chair of the US Steering Committee. Gabriel Mazza, Head of School and Out of School Department, Council of Europe and European chair of the Consortium, Sjur Bergan, Head of the Higher Education and Research Division, Council of Europe and Krzysztof Ostrowski: Minister's Advisor, Ministry of Education, Poland, Chair, 2005 European Year of Citizenship Education, Council of Europe, were among the colleagues attending from Europe.

Among other items discussed were the results of the pilot study 'Universities as Sites of Citizenship', as well as the activities of the 2005 European Year of Citizenship through Education. Most significantly, agreement was reached to significantly expand the number of nations in the Consortium and to consider holding a global forum on higher education and education for democratic citizenship and human rights in Strasbourg in June 2006. At the forum, Consortium members could adopt a Global Declaration on the Responsibility of Higher Education to Advance Education for Citizenship, Democracy and Human Rights.

When we view the formation of the International Consortium on Higher Education, Civic Responsibility, and Democracy in historical perspective, its true significance is better appreciated. Viewed in historical perspective, I believe it potentially constitutes a major development in the progress of the

Scientific Revolution that Francis Bacon worked so hard to promote in the early 17th century.

Heated controversy continues to exist about Bacon's contributions to modern science and modern philosophy of science. Almost everyone agrees, however, that his eloquent, passionate prophecy of the great good that would result from development of a highly collaborative, genuinely experimental, science of inquiry powerfully contributed to the Scientific Revolution and the idea of progress it helped inspire and spread. To John Dewey, Bacon ranked as one of the great figures in world intellectual history.

In his major book calling for Reconstruction in Philosophy, Dewey (1920: 28–32) hailed Bacon as 'the great forerunner of the spirit of modern man', the 'prophet of new tendencies' and the 'real founder of modern thought'. Bacon's devastating criticisms of the 'great body of learning' and aristocratic idealist theories and methodology handed down from antiquity, as well as his devastating criticisms of the quarrelsome, parochial, tradition-bound universities which transmitted and perpetuated antiquated learning and methodology, Dewey observed, powerfully helped revolutionize scientific inquiry and effectively began modern thought. Among the major 'defects' Bacon attributed to universities, their internal divisions and the failure of 'all the different universities of Europe' to collaborate closely ranked high. Viewed in that perspective, the formation of the International Consortium in 1999 can be characterized as a historic positive organizational response to Bacon's critique of universities in his great 1605 work on the *Advancement of Learning*. We quote Bacon's most relevant passage:

as the progress of learning consists not a little in the wise ordering and institutions of each university, so it would be yet much more advanced *if there were a closer connection and relationship between all the different universities of Europe than now there is*. For we see there are many orders and societies which, though they be divided under distant sovereignties and territories, yet enter into and maintain among themselves a kind of contract and fraternity, in so much that they have governors (both provincial and general) whom they all obey. And surely as nature creates brotherhood in families, and arts mechanical contract brotherhood in societies, and the anointment of God superinduces a brotherhood in kings and bishops, and vows and regulations make a brotherhood in religious orders; so in like manner there cannot but be a noble and generous brotherhood contracted among men by learning and illumination, seeing that God himself is called 'the Father of Lights.' (1999: 53–4, emphasis added)

## conclusion

When colleges and universities give very high priority to actively solving strategic, real world, problems in their local community, a much greater likelihood exists that they will significantly advance citizenship, social justice and the public good. More specifically, by focusing on solving *universal* problems that

are manifested in their local communities, institutions of higher learning will be better able to realize Bacon's brilliant proposal that universities should closely collaborate across cultures and national boundaries to advance human welfare. Even more specifically, that strategy will enable them to translate the theoretical advantages of the One University idea into practical action and help create the university-assisted community schools which, this article concludes, is one of the best ways to help develop democratic students, K-16, and thereby significantly contribute to the development of democratic schools, democratic universities, and democratic Good Societies in the 21st century.

## notes

1. It is worth noting that Marx followed Francis Bacon's prophetic lead in *The Great Instauration* (1620) that 'the true ends of knowledge' are 'for the benefit and use of life'.
2. My discussion of Harper in this article derives from the much fuller discussion in a book I have written with my colleagues Lee Benson and John Puckett entitled *Progressing Beyond John Dewey*, as yet unpublished. Pending its publication, see the more succinct discussion in Benson and Harkavy (2000). This article draws freely from that forthcoming book and a forthcoming chapter I have co-written (Harkavy et al., in press).
3. Franklin's 1749 pamphlet is conveniently reprinted in John Hardin Best (1962: 150–1). Franklin's note reflected his Deist views: 'To have in View the *Glory and Service of God*, as some express themselves, is only the same Thing in other Words. For Doing Good to Men is the *only Service of God* in our Power; and to *imitate his Beneficence* is to *glorify him*'.
4. The discussion of the forces of commodification draws freely from Lee Benson and Ira Harkavy (2002); see also John S. Brubacher and Willis Rudy (1976).
5. The discussion of disciplinary ethnocentrism, tribalism, guildism, as well as the sections that follow, draw from and build upon Lee Benson and Ira Harkavy (2003).
6. In its 1982 report, *The University and the Community*, the Organization for Economic Development (OECD) describes the inhibiting effects of university 'siloization' and narrow 'departmentalism' on fostering the interdisciplinary scholarship necessary for solving real community problems. The following epigraph, which begins part 3, chapter 2, neatly captures the report's argument: 'Communities have problems, universities have departments.' See Center for Educational Research and Innovation (1982: 127).
7. Academically-based community service (ABCS) is the term used at Penn to describe the type of service-learning developed and implemented by the university's Center for Community Partnerships. ABCS focuses on community problem-solving and the integration of research, teaching, learning and service, as well as reflection on the service experience.
8. Descriptions of the Consortium and its work can be found in *An Overview of the International Consortium on Higher Education, Civic Responsibility and Democracy* and in Ira Harkavy, 'The History and Future Development of the International Consortium for Higher Education, Civic Responsibility and Democracy,' address to university vice chancellors and other higher educational leaders, Second International Inside Out Conference: Charting Uncertainty: Capital, Community and Citizenship, Ipswich Club, Ipswich, Australia, July 2003, *The Australian*

*Consortium Foundation Paper*, 69–75. They can be conveniently found online at:  
<http://iche.sas.upenn.edu/overview/description.htm> and  
<http://www.australianconsortium.net>.

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