

From the Editor...

## Finding Those Transformational Spaces for Community Engagement

As we continue to celebrate and reflect on the 20th anniversary year of *JHEOE*, we are now challenged to consider what and how we will build on the foundation of community-engaged scholarship that has been laid, and how we create those transformational spaces where this work occurs. Articles in this issue examine the complex relationships, spaces, and systems that are created for community–university engagement to occur and critique new frameworks and methods that can help scholars doing this work make sense of its impact and meaning.

In a thoughtful article that considers the spaces in which community–university engagement work takes place and that builds on boundary-spanning literature, McMillan, Goodman, and Schmid reinterpret the boundary as “the nexus of two interacting communities” and use activity theory as a framework for understanding the complex, sometimes contradictory community networks and social systems at work in community-based research activities. Applying this theory, they examine a science shop—known as the Knowledge Co-op—that “brokers” links between the University of Cape Town and the broader community. They examine and define the “boundary zone” where different communities intersect in this unique space designed for community-based research, and its implications for organizations that work in such a translational and transformational space.

Along with a new understanding of the spaces where community engagement and boundary work take place, authors in this issue also take up transformational learning and how the engagement field can move from more traditional, transactional forms of community engagement to employing critical engagement strategies promoting and supporting social movements, activism, and political and justice-oriented frameworks for engagement. In one such article, Levkoe et al. examine five case studies of participatory action research projects focused on social change for just and sustainable food systems as part of the Community Food Security hub across Canada. They present findings from these case studies that explore the understanding and complexity of partner roles—as well as the tensions that develop over these roles—and consider how partners resolve such tensions in order to develop partnerships that

adopt a social change orientation that more fully addresses the sustainability and social justice goals of the food movement.

In an engrossing autoethnographic account of a student's experience with community-based research (CBR), Ingman uses this qualitative methodology to examine a CBR journal kept over several years as he chronicled his development as a community-based researcher. This compelling, personal account fills a gap in CBR literature; in addition to addressing graduate student experiences, it also identifies common outcomes of the CBR student experience. Moreover, this article serves as a model for community-engaged scholars employing autoethnographic methods in order to enrich and deepen our inquiry around even well-studied topics like student outcomes.

Beatty, Meadows, SwamiNathan, and Mulvihill present a study of the impact of cocurricular community service-learning on students' personal development through Alternative Spring Break (ASB), an alternative break program. Using a quasi-experimental design, the authors surveyed ASB participants and a control group of randomly selected undergraduates using pre- and post-surveys, as well as a survey 8 months after the ASB experiences to study long-term effects. This research design attempts to fill methodological gaps in the existing literature on cocurricular service-learning and alternative break programs, which has been primarily qualitative in nature.

In a featured *Project with Promise*, Plakans et al. consider how the socialization of faculty affects the institutionalization of engaged scholarship and the kind of organizational change and spaces for dialogue that are necessary for embedding public engagement in a university's mission. Continuing with this theme of "spaces for engagement," Surak and Pope discuss Civic Engagement Across the Curriculum (CEAC), a faculty development seminar that created structured space and time for faculty to learn to embed civic engagement in their teaching.

The Relationships and Parenting Support (RAPS) Program is a stress reduction program for new mothers and support partners that is part of a larger university-community partnership. Williams and Oravec chronicle the development of RAPS and present findings about its impact on stress reduction for participants. In addition, they examine the challenges of conducting community-based research with at-risk populations that is truly responsive to the community, culturally competent, and developed *with* rather

than for the community, especially given institutional constraints on faculty time and expectations.

Authors continue to explore the theme of “transformation”—both individual and organizational—in this issue’s book reviews. In his review of Reiter and Oslender’s *Bridging Scholarship and Activism: Reflections from the Frontlines of Collaborative Research*, Hartman reminds us that undertaking community-engaged scholarship in marginalized communities can have profound moral, and sometimes life and death, consequences for both faculty and community members. The activist-scholars in this edited volume challenge us to think about issues of danger and power in work that seeks to transform unjust systems or challenge oppression, and they ask us to consider whether our institutions and disciplines can fully support faculty and graduate students engaged in this sometimes perilous work.

Finally, Breznitz’s book *The Fountain of Knowledge: The Role of Universities in Economic Development*, reviewed by James K. Woodell, analyzes how technology transfer can have profound effects on a university’s relationship and contribution to economic development. Using case study examples from the University of Cambridge and Yale University, Breznitz links operational and organizational changes to the respective institution’s approach to engagement with community and regional partners as a key to the success of institutional technology transfer efforts.

We thank the authors, peer reviewers, and associate editors of articles in this issue for delving into these complex spaces and frameworks where community engagement “lives” and helping us make sense of its impact through a variety of lenses.

Shannon O. Wilder  
Coeditor