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Scholarship of Engagement *becomes part of faculty life*

BGSU faculty have long worked with external communities to help research and solve problems and deal with challenges. But that commitment to public service expanded dramatically in August 2004 when, in his opening day address, President Ribeau announced the Organizing for Engagement Initiative—a plan to broaden and deepen faculty, staff and student outreach and make it a University priority.

One important component of the initiative is the “scholarship of engagement,” which connects discipline-based or interdisciplinary research with the needs of the community. As the University takes up the president’s charge, the campus has been involved in identifying the distinction between engagement that is scholarship and engagement that is service. “This distinction is not intended to discourage the faculty role of service to the external community, and faculty should continue to be appropriately rewarded and recognized for such work,” said Sandra MacNevin, director of the Engagement Initiative.

The University has made significant progress this year to integrate the scholarship of engagement into faculty life.

Deans, chairs and directors have collaborated with one another and with their faculty to infuse the concept into the traditional areas of service, teaching and research and into the reward system.

In his 2004 opening-day remarks, President Ribeau noted that “if we are going to be calling upon faculty to participate in the scholarship of engagement, then we need to align our faculty recognition and reward system so that they are recognized and rewarded for doing it.”

A December deadline has been set by the board of trustees for the integration of the scholarship of engagement into college and departmental tenure and promotion documents.

Facilitating the process

Helping facilitate the process has been Dr. Daniel Madigan, former director of the Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology. In November 2005, Ribeau appointed Madigan as interim director of faculty professional development. Since then, Madigan has worked closely with deans in a number of ways to lay the necessary groundwork for integrating scholarship of engagement into tenure, promotion and merit documents, and has since been

meeting individually with chairs, directors and faculty to help them work on their departmental reward documents.

The campus has also been guided in its efforts by the report of the Standards Committee on the Scholarship of Engagement, created by Ribeau in March 2005 to develop standards and guidelines for the evaluation and assessment of the scholarship of engagement at BGSU, including criteria for methodology, documentation, assessment of impact and methods of dissemination.

When it comes to engaged scholarship, there is no “one size fits all,” Madigan stressed. “Each school and department must define it within the context of their discipline, using language that complements existing scholarship language. It must fit within the vision and values of the department.”

In some colleges, particular faculty became involved early on in the effort. Dr. Madhu Rao, chair of applied statistics and operational research in the College of Business Administration, “stepped forward to draft scholarship of engagement into the merit and tenure and promotion documents for his department,” said Dr. Nancy Merritt, senior associate dean.

“He then shared his work with the rest of the college and offered his help to all the departments.”

College of Health and Human Services Dean Linda Petrosino said her faculty and associate dean took many steps together in working through the process of incorporating scholarship of engagement into their practice and their tenure and promotion policy documents.

“The most difficult challenge in our discussion,” she said, “was deciding at what point your engaged service is scholarship. Traditionally, scholarship must answer an important question, be impactful, and be recognized by peers.”

As with all scholarship, Madigan said, “dissemination and peer review are critical parts of scholarship of engagement. It requires the sharing of new knowledge and getting feedback. Publications are important, but it also means conference papers, presentations, reports and a peer-review process. It includes basic and applied research.”

Dr. John Fischer, School of Teaching and Learning, incorporated his scholarship of engagement activities when he completed his portfolio last year

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*discipline-based or
interdisciplinary research*

scholarship of engagement

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Scholarship of Engagement

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and was promoted to associate professor. Both his areas of research—with Polish and American teachers and students developing democratic education, and as middle school site director for the GEAR Up program in East Toledo—involve engaged scholarship. “I’ve always embedded my research in my outreach, and it’s not a different kind of research in that it still involves data gathering, observation and focus groups,” he said, adding that “traditional research is still extremely valuable as a basis for new work.

“But when thinking about the criteria for the scholarship of engagement, it’s important to be very careful that the outside group you’re working with has input on the research question.”

Integrating engaged scholarship

For some disciplines, like Health and Human Services, the scholarship of engagement is part and parcel of what they do. For other areas not so intrinsically involved in service, promoting the scholarship of engagement has been more of a consciousness-raising effort, said Dr. Donald Nieman, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. “It varies across the college,” he said. “For some areas, engagement is a natural, while for others, it’s a challenge.

“Our strategy has been to identify areas where we have faculty with the expertise and the interest for community engagement and to provide them the resources and the support they need. We want faculty who have a passion to do this to be encouraged and rewarded.”

Faculty in such diverse areas as psychology, political science, art, theatre and film, geology, geography and environmental science are already “very active and

enthusiastic about the scholarship of engagement,” Nieman said. Even some perhaps unexpected fields, such as mathematics and physics and astronomy, have long been engaged in research with K-12 educators on changing the paradigm for teaching of math and science.

Learning community of artist scholars

How widespread the scholarship of engagement is across campus was demonstrated in a film produced last year by the Learning Community of Artist Scholars through the Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology. Led by Dr. Joyce Eastlund Gromko, music education, and directed by Angel Vasquez, theatre and film, the five-part documentary showed—through film, video, graphics and interviews—how BGSU faculty members are partnering with the community on an array of issues. More information on the learning community and the film can be found on the provost’s Web site.

Faculty explore engaged scholarship

Last fall, a diverse group of faculty formed another learning community, facilitated by Madigan, to study the various aspects of the scholarship of engagement, such as how to define it within the larger context of the engagement initiative, how to work productively with the community to address issues and problems and identify necessary support structures within the University to insure the scholarship of engagement’s success.

One member of the group, Eileen Cherry-Chandler, theatre and film, said the interdisciplinary group was able to “network in a substantive way. For me, the most

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Dr. Donald Nieman
Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

valuable thing was the real sense of connection to other areas.” Members helped one another find ways to share their engaged scholarship with the community, and she got advice from Fischer on submitting a paper to an educational publication, which was accepted.

Faculty success plans

In order to further institutionalize and sustain the momentum of the scholarship of engagement, Provost John Folkins recommends that all incoming tenure-track

faculty have Faculty Success Plans. Arrived at through discussions with their chair, colleagues and dean, the plans will provide faculty clear expectations and evaluation criteria.

The plans may be revisited every year because things change and new opportunities surface. As Madigan concludes, “Faculty value a career path that allows for change, flexibility and choices to pursue scholarship that is meaningful to them and to BGSU.”



Left: Dr. Patty Kubow with a student at Langa High School outside Cape Town, South Africa

Below: Beatrice Bavuma, Dr. Kubow and schoolchildren from Langa



Patty Kubow's Cape Town sabbatical

I can't believe you would come here to talk to us.

Dr. Patty Kubow is fervently committed to creating a culture of democracy in Africa through education. She is equally committed to the belief that that democracy must be based in the specific experience and belief of the people.

Kubow, in the College of Education and Human Development's Division of Educational Foundations and Inquiry, has recently returned from a sabbatical in Cape Town, South Africa, where she conducted a study of local citizens' perspectives on democracy and education. The long-term goal is to share the information with South African educators and help them develop culturally relevant curricula to reinforce students' democratic values and behaviors.

"This is not a democracy that is imposed on someone. It's a democracy based on the belief that people do have something to say as a result of their lived experiences," Kubow said. Democratic education differs from civics classes, in which students learn about the structure of the government and its legal and political systems. Instead, it seeks to give students a social and cultural understanding of their identity as a citizen. "I'm encouraging them to ask 'Who am I in this country?' and how they define citizenship," she explained.

The concept of listening to people living in a "township," or informal settlement, is not common in South Africa. "A student came up to me at one of the schools I visited and said, 'I can't believe you would come here to talk to us,'" Kubow said, adding, "This is the kind of work that can only be done in person because it means exploring all the political, social and economic aspects of who we are. People do have something to say and to contribute to the dialogue, but they wonder will they be heard, and who is there to hear them."

Disparity still exists

Though the country is now a democracy, and children have the right to public education, there is still a tremendous disparity in the quality of education and services between the mainly white cities and the black and "coloured" townships. Langa, located just outside Cape Town, is the oldest of these townships to which blacks were sent to live in the '50s, displaced from their fertile farmlands or urban homes.

Kubow found textbooks in the township's schools to be few and dated, and generally 45-60 children per class. "The best of all the classes I visited had 30 kids," she recalled. In the traditional Bantu education system of the former apartheid state, students were not taught to be citizens

because they were not, in fact, full citizens, and this has been slow to change.

The unequal system has resulted in skepticism among the population and educators about efforts toward educational reform, and they have not been open to outsiders coming in.

But, perhaps because of Kubow's commitment of her time, self and resources and her four previous visits to South Africa to study indigenous knowledge and education, she gained immediate access to all 12 schools in the district—five secondary, four intermediate and three primary. For five months, she conducted interviews and focus groups with principals, teachers and students. That had never been done before and yielded a wealth of information.

She asked the same three questions of everyone:

- What is your understanding of democracy?
- What kinds of attitudes, skills and abilities are needed in South Africa?
- What can your school do to help develop those skills?

"Even kids can handle this level of questioning, and they had a lot to say," Kubow said. As a specialist in comparative and international development education and democratic education, these questions have been the focus of her research for

15 years. "I wanted to find out to what extent they felt their voices and views had been heard, what they valued and how they viewed their democratic role," she said.

Welcomed by the community, she was also able to hold community-member focus groups around the township. Of the group of nine men and two women in one of the community discussions, she reports, all except one were unemployed, mirroring the national situation.

Mountains to climb

The African National Congress government has invested heavily in education, but they wonder why they are not seeing higher rates of matriculation, Kubow said. Overwhelming social factors have played a leading role.

"One in 10 people has HIV/AIDS in South Africa, and sometimes one in four in the informal settlements. Unemployment is high, at 35-40 percent nationally and even higher in the townships; 60 percent of children in Langa come from broken homes, alcoholism is common and crime is rampant, including sexual assault. Though racial apartheid is ended, there's an economic apartheid between whites and others.

"All these factors—class, poverty and health issues—shape

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Kubow

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people's understanding of their worth," she noted.

There is also a lack of communication across the class divisions in the township, Kubow found. She took her three questions to Joe Slovo, a squatter's camp on the outskirts of town where most citizens of Langa have never set foot. School is held in huge freight containers for the children who live there in squalor.

On the other end of the spectrum, she was invited to speak to a group of doctors at the University of Stellenbosch-Tygerberg, an Afrikaner medical school nearby. They had learned of her research and wanted to hear about the role of a healthy citizen in a democracy. "They realized that the vibrancy and life of a democracy depend in part on its citizens being well

enough to participate," Kubow said. She also presented her democratic research to the Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape where she was a Visiting Research Professor.

Kubow is in the process of transcribing hundreds of hours of tape she collected from interviews and focus groups. After compiling and analyzing the resulting data, her goal is to return in 2007 to "begin to move in the direction of curriculum development," she said.

Turning promise into reality

Given South Africa's apartheid past, the country has made considerable progress, but its current problems are daunting, she said. Two days after she arrived on Feb. 1, President Thabo Mbeki gave his State of the Nation speech in which he called South Africa's present moment in

history a "time of hopefulness and optimism," she said, and focused on education as a way out of some of the country's crises.

"The timing is right for change," Kubow said. The challenge will be to preserve

the traditional South African philosophy of *ubuntu*, a humanistic understanding of self and community, while creating a sense of the self as a fully engaged member of a society working for its nation's betterment.

Young leaders think globally

It's a simple but powerful idea: bring young people together today to prevent international problems tomorrow.

That was the idea of the Young Global Leaders Summit, held on campus July 15 and attended by more than 150 students from around the nation.

Organized by BGSU student Jake Gallardo, a University Honors Program student from the Philippines, the event was an opportunity for students, international guest speakers and some parents and teachers to discuss "Hope Not Hate: The Future of U.S.-Muslim World Relations." They also attended workshops to prepare them to conduct similar events on their home campuses.

The event was sponsored by Americans for Informed Democracy—a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization whose goal is to inspire a new generation of internationalist leaders.

"What impressed me most about this summit was that it was truly student-run," said Dr. Kristie Foell, director of International Studies. "What I learned from the whole experience was that students want to think big, and who are we as faculty to discourage that? We should embrace it! I'm very glad that Dean Don Nieman sees it this way as well; he was very supportive throughout last summer's process."

Gallardo and other students are continuing to "think big," and have formed the Students' Initiative for Global Competitiveness to address the economic and academic challenges facing Americans as they increasingly must operate on an international level.

A Jan. 19, 2007, conference is in the planning stages and will "bring together the academic experience with a real student initiative," Foell said. The colleges of Arts and Sciences and Business Administration and other campus groups have already thrown their support behind the effort. To get involved, email Gallardo at jakemg@bgsu.edu.



BGSU's United Way campaign sets goal at 1,000 donors

Campaign co-chairs Dr. Robert DeBard (left), higher education and student affairs, and Pa'Trice Pettaway Day (center) sell raffle tickets at CampusFest as part of kick-off activities for this year's United Way Campaign including Northwest Ohio Community Shares. The campaign runs through Oct. 27. This year's goal will be the number of donors instead of a dollar figure—and the 2006 goal is 1,000 donors. Also, donors may now use a credit card in addition to a paper or electronic pledge.

As an added incentive, this year the Stranahan Foundation will match each pledge of \$1,000 or more, so if an individual gives \$1,000, it will yield \$2,000 for the United Way.

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