

A New Partnership Brings Civic Engagement Program Leaders Together

In partnership with the Kettering Foundation, the Talloires Network co-hosted a 3-day summer workshop in July entitled *Innovations in Democratic Engagement: Universities and Their Civic Mission around the World*. Sixteen participants from twelve countries traveled to Dayton, Ohio, to participate in a critical exchange. We found, despite differences in culture and context, all of the participants shared an interest in strengthening their own civic engagement programs and learning from one another.

Some of the common concerns, by theme, were as follows:

Problems of Democracy Around the World

- Some governments are ignoring the majority vote and student movements (UK, Chile, Spain) are emerging that challenge long-standing and large scale systems such as capitalism and globalization. Listening to the new generation is essential. An important question that has surfaced: are institutions of higher education reinforcing economic inequalities?

Civic Engagement and the Core Mission of Institutions

- Civic engagement should be integrated across institutions and disciplines but is typically confined to isolated faculty and offices. Faculty are key to institutionalizing civic engagement, but resist even when university leadership is committed. Faculty need training as well as promotion/tenure systems that reward engaged scholarship. Some faculty are not a good fit for engaged scholarship.

Institutions and Communities

- Mutually beneficial relationships must be based on exchange, rather than dissemination, of knowledge. There is an important difference between working with and working for communities; long-term relationships are better than short-term relationships. Staff and faculty need to have or acquire cultural competencies and function as university-community liaisons. An orientation period is necessary for faculty, staff, students and community partners.

Civic Education, the Curriculum, and Service Learning

- Apathy is a universal problem among both faculty and students. However, in many contexts, the university is the center of student political life; unrest begins at the university. On one hand it is disruptive to learning and on the other hand, it prepares youth to lead. There is a need to teach a productive form of politics so students understand the larger system of politics and how to realize structural reforms.

Public Scholarship and Rewarding Engaged Faculty

- Disciplines are beginning to promote engaged concepts of scholarship and question the dominant epistemology. A key need is for peer reviewed and indexed journals to serve as outlets for engaged scholarship. Scholars are active in communities but their work does not always translate into articles that journals will accept. Reward systems are starting to change, but engaged faculty still feel that they are putting their careers at risk and forced to separate their civic aspirations from their professional lives.

In the end, a majority of participants expressed the desire to maintaining the group and collaborate in the future. We are currently communicating in cyberspace and have developed a short list of possible projects. Below is a list of the summer workshop participants.

EUROPE

Silvia Arias, Universidad Autonoma de Madrid
Juliet Millican, Brighton University

LATIN AMERICA

Magdalena Jara, Universidad Católica
Claudia Mora Motto, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana
Ernesto Ornelas, Tecnológico de Monterrey

AUSTRALIA

Gary Smith, University of Western Sydney

AFRICA

Alaa Ibrahim, American University of Cairo
Thabu Putu, University of Witwatersrand
Joseph Francis, University of Venda

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Derek Barker, Kettering Foundation
Lorlene Hoyt, Talloires Network and Tufts University
Mark Wilson, Auburn University
Nyvea Silva Herrera, Universidad del Sagrado Corazón

ASIA

Saran Gill, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
Sergey Golubev, The New Eurasia Foundation
Richard Hopper, University of Central Asia

For more information about the partnership or workshop, you may contact Lorlene Hoyt, Director of Programs and Research (Lorlene.Hoyt@Tufts.edu). To learn more about the Kettering Foundation, please go to: <http://kettering.org/>