What Teaching Looks Like

Higher Education through Photographs

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5.01
A medical student at a doctoral institution works with a patient
at a free clinic as part of a service learning program.

Beyond Campus

Teaching and Learning in Context

Seasoned practitioners don't always . . . perform [like a] textbook. . . . Clinical skills, versus other knowledge, are best lived or learned in the clinic.

—*technical/professional instructor and participant in The Teaching and Learning Project, doctoral institution*

[The students] have an understanding of how their design has an impact on the people they are trying to help. . . . They know that these people have loved ones. . . . It's challenging, but if I could, I would definitely do this every semester.

—*STEM instructor and participant in The Teaching and Learning Project, doctoral institution*

Off the Campus Map

Through photographs in preceding chapters, we have visited and reflected on many of the places within college and university campuses where teaching and learning occur, including classrooms of many kinds, neat and chaotic alike. But a college or university is more than its campus, and learning extends well outside the lines of the campus map. Institutions are part of their communities; students and faculty learn and collaborate with nonprofit and civic organizations, K–12 schools, and a wide range of employers. As central as classroom-based learning is, these partnerships, when structured well, become crucial for postsecondary institutions and for their larger communities. Campus-community partnerships create new pathways for access to higher education and ensure that the education offered is authentic, relevant, and embracing of complexity.
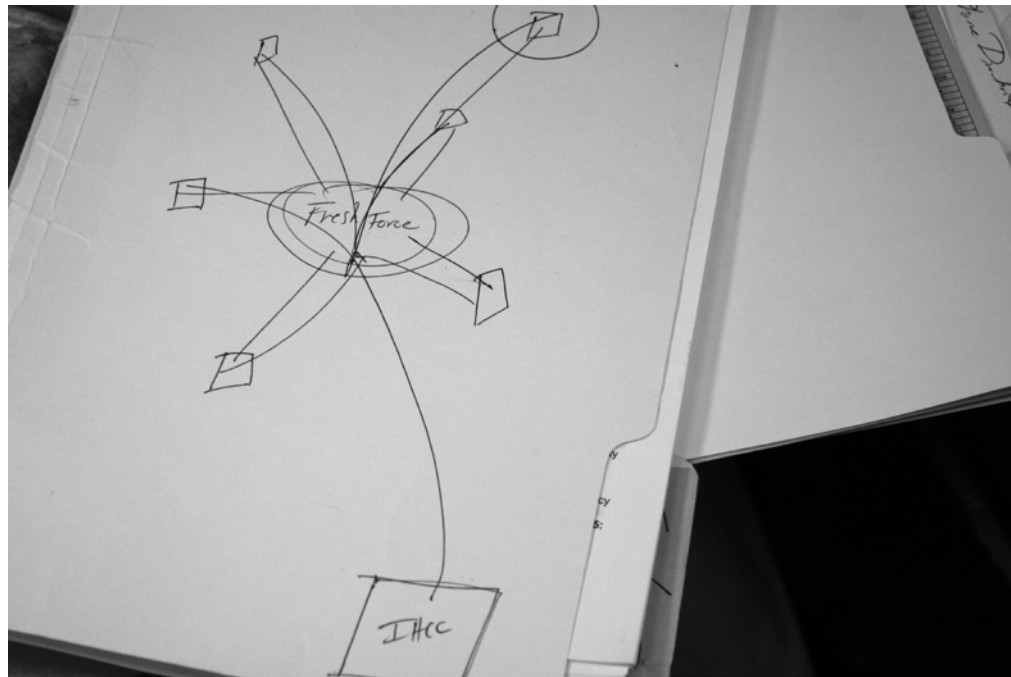
As physical campuses emptied during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the roles of physical campuses came into question; some argued against their ability to endure in their current forms (e.g., Taparia 2020; McKenzie 2019; DeVaney 2020). This questioning arrived alongside high-profile US institutional closures and consolidations in recent years, reflecting economic and demographic forces already straining finances within the higher education sector in the United States (Education Dive 2020; Butrymowicz and D'Amato 2020)—phenomena that are shared, to varying degrees, with institutions in the UK, Australia, and elsewhere that are facing enrollment disruptions and budget shortfalls due to the coronavirus pandemic (Witze 2020). In this chapter, as you see how postsecondary institutions intertwine with their communities through examples in the United States, it is an opportunity to reflect on and become clearer about the purpose of college and university campuses more broadly—not as isolated enclaves, but as organizations that support productive, contextual learning benefitting not just students, but also neighbors, families, institutions, businesses, and communities.

Learning in the Community

Learning that brings postsecondary students together with community partners, usually through structured coursework with guidance and mentorship from college or university faculty, has several names in the United States, including service learning, field-based experiential learning, and community-based learning. These approaches have been heralded as "high impact practices" due to their association with student success broadly, and more specifically for their contributions to deep learning, the kind where students "integrate, synthesize, and apply knowledge . . . understand themselves in relation to others and the larger world, and . . . acquire the intellectual tools and ethical grounding to act with confidence for the betterment of the human condition" (Kuh 2008, 17). It is no wonder that in recent years, such learning experiences have extended beyond settings where they were first implemented, such as health and education, to new applications including computer science hack-a-thons, urban studies projects, environmental fieldwork, and business and design projects (e.g., Lara and Lockwood 2016; Brail 2013).

This type of learning can help to resolve apparent tensions between the ideal of a liberal education and the practical need for career preparation. Community-based learning supports students' development of deep and broad critical thinking, grounded in real-world experiences, which are frequently among the intended outcomes of a liberal education; at the same time, US employers report being more likely to hire recent graduates with such experiences due to their confidence in the way these experiences contribute to employers' top-tier desired skills, including communication, critical thinking, ethical judgment, teamwork, and real-world applications (Hart Research Associates 2018). The positive impacts of community-based learning and service learning programs on student success in US higher education are well researched and extend to students' professional and social development (Trager 2020). Having engaged my own students in service

learning, I can personally attest to those positive impacts (first-person statements in this chapter are in reference to Martin Springborg). For example, students in one of my photography courses could choose a service learning project teaching high school students about documentary photography. Those high school students could, as a result, incorporate photography into their volunteer work with younger kids and other organizations. Some of my most accomplished students took part in this and other service learning partnerships, and a few of them went on to transfer to prestigious universities. The rough diagram pictured in figure 5.02 illustrates how this train-the-trainer model worked with our institution, Inver Hills Community College (IHCC), connecting with a community partner,

5.02
An impromptu illustration of a service learning program at an associate's institution.

Fresh Force, which in turn coordinated volunteers at many school sites across the region.

Such positive impacts are also recognized by faculty and students at institutions across the United States. The national Campus Compact, the "only national higher education association dedicated solely to campus-based civic engagement," lists 1,022 member institutions, each providing community-based learning programs and opportunities (Campus Compact, n.d.). I've made photographs of service learning courses at several institutions. Some of these courses were especially fitting of one institution's Jesuit focus, where the service learning program is devoted to carrying out the mission of positive community involvement and impact; elsewhere, service learning courses enabled colleges and universities to connect with and contribute to their surrounding communities and engage students in applied learning.

In order to document service learning courses, I worked with staff from both centers for teaching and learning and well–established service learning programs. Many of my images from these courses illustrate the institutions' deep roots of service to the community and the rich learning experiences that emerge from those traditions; in some cases they are embedded across the curriculum. The images show engineering faculty and students visiting sites to evaluate their pro-totype designs in use by children with disabilities. They show students treating patients at a local free clinic. They show students preparing food and serving those in the community who are in need of a hot meal. The images emphasize human connections with community members that simply cannot be replicated or approximated within the physical borders of a campus. As you spend time with images 5.04 – 5.07, consider how the service part of the learning comes through in the photographs. (These photographs and prompts, with several oth-ers from this chapter, are included in the online resource "Close Reading and Observation Exercises.")

5.04–5.05
Sequence of two photographs: A faculty member in engineering at a doctoral institution works with her students at a community organization for children with disabilities, where children use adaptive learning tools designed by the students.

5.06
Medical students at a doctoral institution work with a patient at a free clinic as part of a service learning program.

5.07
A faculty member in physician assistant studies at a doctoral institution with a patient at a free clinic as part of a service learning program.

There is much more going on than you might notice on first viewing these images. These service learning experiences entail more than committing to and providing service, and more than simply applying classroom or textbook ideas in new settings—they involve complex negotiations and networks of support. Students may be navigating new dimensions of their identities, for example, as future members of a profession. In an interview for *The Teaching and Learning Project*, one faculty member involved in guiding students' community-based learning observed: "Professionalism . . . it's something to talk about it, but another to practice it. Tools [and] uniforms mean something. Junior practitioners are wearing them, [others] are not." This instructor went on to reflect on the multiple layers of observing, modeling, and relationship-building happening in community-based settings: "Students get to see their own teachers practicing. . . . They listen to how their teachers interact with [community members], how they address their concerns [and] develop rapport. Sometimes that observation is better than hearing the teacher try to describe this."

Service and community-based learning also has the potential to support postsecondary students' exploration and integration of identity and values. At Caltech, the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Outreach found that students participating in community-based learning with local public K-12 schools not only gained skills in teaching, communication, and deeper understanding of their STEM studies, but also reported enhanced patience, reflection on their growth and change while in college, and awareness of unearned socioeconomic privileges that helped some of them succeed in STEM fields. Cassandra and colleagues understand these developments as part of the formation of students' identities, including their reflection on the social context for scientific learning and work, as well as the importance of partnership and collaboration with communities (Horii and Aiken 2013). Other institutions have purposefully embedded community engagement in courses within general education and various disciplines,

such as one college's required ethics and diversity course, where this form of learning encouraged "connections between one's ethical values and one's actions in our diverse world" and "deeper engagement with the cultural, social, and other organizational systems that bind communities together" (Caldwell-O'Keefe and Recla 2020, 153).

Whether built into a course, or structured as a co-curricular activity, service and community-based learning benefit from careful incorporation of structures and methods that support equitable participation. Buffie Longmire-Avital's critical analysis of ways in which high impact practices can reproduce or disrupt longstanding higher education inequities offers important guidance. For example, Longmire documents multiple barriers to the participation of historically minoritized students, ranging from awareness of opportunities and their benefits, to financial and personal barriers, to ongoing systemic unconscious bias among instructors and mentors (Longmire-Avital 2018, 2019b). Community-engaged learning also needs instructors and mentors who are prepared to model critical reflection (Caldwell-O'Keefe and Recla 2020). Longmire-Avital articulates a model for critical mentoring that prioritizes mentors' own reflection on their positionality and privilege, along with the cultural wealth that historically minoritized students contribute, the potentially reparative impact of high impact practices on educational inequities, and the need for self-care for students and mentors alike (Longmire-Avital 2019a, 2020).

In addition to building these forms of instructor/mentor preparation and reflection into these experiences, fulfilling the potential of service and community-based learning also takes often unseen labor in the form of planning and follow-up work. Teachers of service learning courses often work closely with students before and after their interactions with community partners. As you see these interactions in the photographs, particularly in images 5.08 – 5.14, some may look much like other classroom-based learning. Notice if your encoun-

ter with the community components changes your perspective on those seemingly routine PowerPoint presentations and discussions, including the nature of the work of the faculty and students—the work behind the service learning. At times, these photographs capture moments when service learning students are being coached on-site by their faculty mentors, or when they are pausing to grapple with challenging issues and unfamiliar routines in these new-for-them community settings. In other cases, we get a glimpse of the collaboration and relationship-building that happens between postsecondary teachers and community partners, who must also invest time and effort with each other.

The preparation and follow-up, along with the long-term support for and connection between postsecondary institutions and service learning sites, are crucial for both the learning part and the service part of service learning. The second portion of that equation has not received nearly as much attention, with many fewer studies exploring the benefits and challenges for community-based organizations when they partner with postsecondary institutions. In studies that do so, though, the importance of true reciprocity and collaboration emerge as critical elements underlying the success of service and community-based learning programs, especially transparency, clarity, communication, and collaborative planning (Blouin and Perry 2009; Karasik 2020). Postsecondary instructors and community partners alike invest time, effort, and attention into creating and maintaining equitable partnerships, as well as in preparing students to conduct themselves in ways that are suitable to the specific community settings, while students are still learning what those roles entail and how to apply knowledge and skills from class to new environments. Staff and offices supporting service and community-based learning also support these efforts: for example, at Caltech, the staff at the center that coordinates educational partnerships cultivates campus–K-12 partnerships on a district-wide basis, ensuring that teachers' input and needs are built into the planning process and that postsecondary students are well

prepared for their work with younger students. The behind-the-scenes work of college and university faculty and staff, in partnership with community-based organizations, is what drives these powerful connections; as with other infrequently seen aspects of higher education, this work is worth making more visible and tangible through photographs.

5.08
*A faculty member in
physician assistant studies at
a doctoral institution consults
with students at a free clinic
as part of a service learning
program.*

5.09
Medical students at a doctoral institution with a patient at a free clinic as part of a service learning program.

5.10
A faculty member in engineering at a doctoral institution reflects with engineering students during a discussion in a service learning class.

5.11
A faculty member in sociology at a doctoral institution answers questions from students following a campus presentation.

5.12
A faculty member in sociology at a doctoral institution gives a campus presentation on her research.

5.13–5.14
Sequence of two photographs: A faculty member in sociology at a doctoral institution consults with the director of a community food shelf as part of a service learning partnership.

Blurring the Boundaries

Higher education institutions in the United States are increasingly expanding learning beyond their campuses and beyond their typical students through programs that bring learning to students who might not otherwise have access, thereby lowering barriers to participation in college courses. Although online education may get more attention in this regard, concurrent and dual enrollment programs—both of which open college courses up to secondary school students, either at the secondary school site or elsewhere—have important roles to play (NACEP, n.d.).

I photographed dual enrollment classes at a technical college, and while some lines were clearly drawn to distinguish secondary school students' physical space within the college's culinary program, students otherwise largely worked and learned alongside each other in the sprawling, fully operational college kitchen, regardless of their age or enrollment status. I remember thinking as I photographed in this environment that this was a far cry from any learning experiences I had before college. Students exhibited significantly more professionalism and rigor in the interactions playing out before me, where they were ultimately responsible for the complete range of tasks required to staff, prepare, and serve banquet-style meals for events. The precision, teamwork, technical knowledge and skill development, and adoption of professional roles and comportment, among secondary and postsecondary students alike, stood out. As with any well-designed, complex college course—but one with added challenges of sourcing fresh ingredients, ensuring that banquet guests are served, and managing students at very different places in their educational trajectories—faculty invested substantial planning and behind-the-scenes work on logistics, not to mention the administrative and institutional commitment and coordination behind these hors d'oeuvres (see images 5.15 – 5.21).

5.15–5.16
Sequence of two photographs: A faculty member in culinary arts consults with culinary students at an associate's institution.

5.17
*Space in a culinary arts
kitchen is reserved for
high school students at an
associate's institution.*

5.18–5.20
*Sequence of three photographs:
Students in a culinary arts
program at an associate's
institution prepare to serve
food for a campus event.*

5.21
Faculty in a culinary arts program at an associate's institution reflect on their work.

In addition to dual and concurrent enrollment, other kinds of programs also blur the lines between formal college enrollment and alternative settings, locations, and forms of access. For example, a collaboration between Columbus City Schools and Otterbein University has brought college and secondary teachers together through professional learning communities; along with other initiatives, this effort aims to build bridges between high school and university faculty and support students' transition to college (Otterbein University 2019). College-in-prison programs, where postsecondary faculty teach credit-bearing courses for incarcerated individuals working toward their degrees, are also reinventing what it means to be in college, while demonstrating positive impacts for participating students and reimagining justice in the US (Ken Burns Presents 2019; Fain 2019; Gerstmann 2019; Prison Studies Project, n.d.). As colleges and universities consider other communities where access to education is limited, newer programs are working to bring full-scholarship, academically rigorous liberal arts courses to isolated communities through partnerships with local community organizations (e.g., Bard Microcollege, n.d.). We hope that these examples, along with those shown in this chapter's photographs, spark expansive thinking about the locations, formats, and students we imagine when we picture higher education.

Whether higher education extends beyond the campus map through service and community-based learning, or whether the lines between college students and learners in the community become less distinct, postsecondary institutions are expanding the opportunities they provide. As we come to understand that a liberal arts education, which is fully compatible with technical and professional preparation, builds a more caring, compassionate, and civically engaged citizenry (AAC&U 2020), colleges and universities must continue to increase their contributions to their communities. After all, postsecondary institutions consist not only of students, faculty, and staff, but also of neighbors, job holders, leaders,

volunteers, parents, and many other roles, right alongside community members. Ties are built on face-to-face, person-to-person experiences, which result in benefits not only to the community, but authentic learning for students, who will leave their postsecondary paths with the desire and ability to keep learning. We hope that they truly embrace the identity of a lifelong learner, due in part to their learning experiences outside the classroom and beyond the boundaries of the campus.

5.22
A faculty member in culinary arts prepares a table for a campus event.

Questions for Further Reflection

- What locations, formats, and students do you imagine when you picture higher education? How do the photographs in this chapter align with or challenge your conceptions?
- What do the photographs in this chapter communicate about the teaching practices and supports associated with service and community-based learning?
- If your campus includes service learning programs or opportunities, how are those activities made visible to people on campus? To people in the community? If photographs are present, or absent, in communications, why do you think that might be the case?