

**REMARKS BY WAYNE MEISEL,
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Introduction

Since I became aware of this work nearly thirty years ago, first as a student, then as an activist, and for the past 17 years as a Foundation director, the term has evolved from volunteering to community service, and service learning to community-based research. Over the years we all have experimented with new ideas and have been under the banner of different terms, all meant in their day to suggest that we would indeed get it right this time...and all inevitably are criticized and replaced for not going far enough. Civic Engagement is the term we currently use, and at least for the present, the concept continues to hold the promise of a bold and hopeful vision for significant work that can create meaningful change.

For the last four years a number of us from different campuses and communities from around the country have come together to think anew about the work we do regarding campus community engagement and student involved in service and social justice issues. The initial list of schools included UCLA, Washington and Lee, Mars Hill College and The College of New Jersey. All these schools had in one way or another demonstrated innovation and excellence in this area yet were committed to press forward on their own campus as well as assist and partner with others along the way. Another thing this diverse group of schools had in common was that they all had established service-based scholarships as part of their relationship with the Bonner Foundation. Thus all of the original partners have, as part of their campus community, a core group of students who had committed to making significant ongoing service commitments to be involved in community issues and in engaging other students to join with them in such endeavors.

After nearly two years of conversation and once we began to be able to construct and articulate our fundamental ideals and our strategies for design, another dozen schools, all involved with the Bonner Foundation's service scholarship, were chosen from a competitive selection process. Again the depth of the diversity of these institutions was inspiring with institutions ranging from the University of Anchorage to Morehouse College in Atlanta Georgia.

Together we are moving forward as we innovate and implement on our own campuses as

well as providing information, tools and best practices, and moral support for each other. While it our intent that all the schools involved in the Bonner Program will consider and implement some type of civic engagement academic journey, it is our hope that all of higher education will be challenged and affirmed, lead and supported by the work that we have done so far to date.

The End of the Beginning

As we gather and present at this annual gathering of AAC&U, it is important to understand that this is to misquote Churchill, “not the end but the end of the beginning.” To use a business analogy this is the meeting in which we go public. And public we will be. Over the past year, the Foundation and AAC&U have had meaningful dialogue and begun significant programming with a focus on the work that has come out of the FIPSE grant. One example is the current issue of Diversity Digest, which features the work of the Bonner Foundation with a focus on the civic Engagement work that has come form, the grant. Many of the contributors to this publication are faculty who have provided leadership for this project.

This partnership and connection to our work with Civic Engagement will. AAC&U will publish a monograph based on this grant (which Ari Hoy will present on Friday afternoon) that will in turn document and communicate what we have done and where we are headed over the past three years. With all of that we will have launched our work into the sphere of civil discourse, public dialoged and best practice of our work.

So hope, my request, m plea and my conviction tell me that we will move forward together admits our difference and continue to provide a powerful effective and compelling voice for change, innovation, creativity and best practice.

Backdrop of Service, Service Learning and Civic Engagement in Higher Education

Over the years, many schools have established community service/service learning centers that organize and champion student and campus involvement in the community, both locally and throughout the world. At their best these centers, according to Dr. Jose Calderon of Pitzer College, create “civic space that is emerging around the edges of some of our college campuses today. It promises to be a transformative borderland where new forms of translation can occur that integrate the academic world with civic purpose, learning with action, theory with practice, and reciprocal research with collective social change.”

While there has been significant academic engagement, mostly around the pedagogy of service learning, most of the service activity that occurs in higher education is performed as a co-curricular activity. The result was a defined student developmental model where we found there was little in the culture of campus community service that talked about

age appropriate service or that considered student activity in such a way that it could be strategic for building a campus-wide culture of service and an infrastructure to maintain that focus. With the focus and energy behind community service in our culture, we at the Bonner Foundation discovered the need to create a series of defined challenges based on rising levels of expectation. The outcome of this work was the creation of a student developmental model that we have called Service as Transformation. This curriculum for a co-curricular activity has enabled us to send a clear message to students, administrators and community leaders that community service is not just about the individual student, the campus service program nor the community, but instead all three at the same time in equal measure.

But this student developmental model has had its limits. It has not been easy nor has there been much momentum to embrace these rising levels of expectations, which call on, and require students to take on serious engagement both on the campus and in the community. Higher education leaders still tout the number of hours served or the percentage of students who participate without regard to quality of service or the level of discovery and learning.

The other challenge we have faced is that as students get more deeply involved, the administrators of our programs find the deep need to reflect, discuss, read, write and educate students about the issues they are encountering and the problems they are facing. It sounds like the student is in the right kind of place because isn't that what college is all about? Yet this is where we encounter the great divide between the academic work of higher education and the co-curricular activities of student life. Campus administrators often find themselves feeling compelled to engage students in deep levels of reading and writing. Yet, given the nature of higher education and the academic demands placed on many of these students, there is a reaction, and I think rightfully so, against including more academic rigor in a co-curricular setting.

What has been happening is that students participate in courses that include service learning and community based research as part of the course work. Some classes in all different departments make this the focus of the strategy for teaching and learning. The impact of these academic experiences are often transformative for all involved: students discover a way to connect their intellect with the world outside the school, faculty encounter a student body passionate and engaged in the discipline and community agencies receive expertise and products that they might not be able to afford and that strengthens the capacity of their infrastructure. Yet too often these courses are experiences that come and go with the academic calendar and the level of engagement waxes and wanes significantly.

The FIPSE Initiative

It is at this point that the idea and the design of the civic engagement academic certificate

came to be. Though not a very poetic phrase, it was meant to be more descriptive and instructive than catchy or compelling. We found ourselves having gone quite far and deep with a community service co-curricular student developmental model, which offered students a chance to engage for their entire time in school. What we wanted to do was design and create a parallel, yet integrated path on the academic side of things that would match up with the service activity that was predominantly co-curricular.

As we began this process we were aware of many challenges including:

- Many students are already over-stressed because of academic, work and social demands.
- Students find it difficult to include additional courses because of the time, costs and existing requirements for majors and graduation.
- Curriculum change takes time and energy and is designed to change slowly.
- It is expensive to create even a small number of new courses.

In response to this, our design included:

- Providing financial and other forms of support for students to make significant contributions to the community (service based scholarships, community-based federal work study funds, and AmeriCorps Education Awards).
- Identifying existing courses within the curriculum and even within their major that touch on the issues that connect to their service work. This meant that students would not have to take additional courses, but rather their choices within requirements were directed.
- Considering the individual campus cultures at each school and make a case-by-case determination as to whether this academic journey is a certificate, a minor, a specialization or some other distinction.

In short, we felt that throughout the curriculum at all of our schools there was academic inquiry that connected to the civic engagement ideal. And rather than try and create new courses we took what already existed and provided a framework that was cognizant of development, sequence and excellence.

While none of the language and terms we have come to use are ones that are universally accepted, and while the construct is not followed by all participants, it is meant to suggest a pattern or what we call an "academic journey" that parallels the co-curricular student developmental model which has a beginning, middle and end. In addition, it connects service and learning without relying on a forced service learning classroom pedagogy and which respects, engages and is lead by faculty commitment to teaching, research and academic discipline. We began with the language of "certificate" to suggest something that was less focused and stringent as a minor. Yet the culture and practice of different institutions decided to use the construct of a minor to frame the work that we were doing. Regardless of the identification or the designation, we charted an academic journey, which begins with a led in course and ends with a capstone/ presentation of service that is

designed to bring closure the experience as well as point the students in a direction after they graduate.

In order to frame the pillars of content and design, we articulated an academic journey intent on being both focused and flexible. Participating institutions have considered this strategy, studied its own curriculum, made adjustments and moved forward with articulating and establishing a formal academic path. The fundamentals of this design includes:

- a) a lead-in course,
- b) a course that focus on issue of poverty,
- c) a course that engages in public policy and/or politics,
- d) a service learning or a community-based learning project,
- e) an international internship or experience either home or abroad, and
- f) a capstone course, a senior thesis, an independent study, or a paper that brings together the entire experience and looks ahead to what is next.

A Design for Civic Engagement: The FIPSE “Pillars” of Content and Design

The breakthrough of this initiative is that we have made several claims and discoveries that challenge and change the way we think about what we do and the approach in which we do it

We have identified these elements as pillars to indicate their prominence and role in upholding the ideas and constructs that we have identified through this work tougher over the past three years butt also the work we have done individually throughout our respective careers

We break down the pillars into two categories: The fist set of pillars mandates three areas of focus that any community service or civic engagement initiative must include in their program design and activities. Three of these pillars include a focus on poverty, a commitment to global understanding and a direct and deliberate connection between community service and political awareness and participation

The second set of pillars articulate key elements in program design that are required to understand and apply in order to move the conversation, level of program and standard for accomplishment to a higher level. The program design models include intensity of the experience, integration of the curricular with the co –curricular and the multi year design of he program.

A) Pillars of Content

A Focus on poverty

We can no longer do service well and thoughtfully if we do not understand the reality, the

pains and suffering, and explore the causes of (and solutions to) poverty. In every action we take, we must ask ourselves: How does this effect poverty in America and the world? For too long we have sent students out in the community and celebrated with vigor our accomplishments and our righteousness for having gone out for a day or for taking a week-long trip to a place that requires a passport. We have now claimed for ourselves and established a standard that states that students must encounter issues of poverty in the classroom before and during their outreach into the community. There are many ways for an academic setting to communicate the truth and the pain of poverty whether it is through literature, history, political science or chemistry. Students must know the world into which they are entering and they certainly must know the communities where they are serving.

A Connection to politics

When I was a college student there were two ways to get involved in the world. One was through community service, the other through political action. In the service world we were told to do our service but to keep out of politics. Politics wasn't volunteering. Not anymore. This initiative has staked the claim, raised the bar, broken through the design of limited expectations and instead we have said that good community service makes good politics and good politics affects the service we need to do. We look at and embrace the key indicators of civic engagement identified by CIRCLE out of the University of Maryland to instruct us on the comprehensive and near complete approach to encompassing fundamental civic engagement activities. Bottom line, if you care about the people you serve, you will study, engage and participate in the political process. If you don't see the connection and make the connection to politics in your service, you are not serving well.

Engagement in the world

Recently I was asked to travel to France to speak at the Council of Europe. Understanding that I would have to face educators and leaders from around the world, many of which were filled with hostility to America, I wondered how to talk about the service work that we do. If I merely talked about the hours of service that we did, or the percentage of students that said they did service (indicators that we use regularly in the states), those still didn't tell any story of value. We may be mentoring a child, but did students know what was happening in the Sudan, Cambodia, Venezuela and North Korea? We know the answer all too often is "no". We have often used the saying "think globally, act locally", but in this day and age we are compelled to think globally and act globally as well. We are compelled to understand what we do in our service, its impact and how it might improve the life of people half way around the world, and not just in the neighborhood that borders campus. Again, there are many ways to learn about and engage a multi-cultural, multi-nation world. The most apparent practice is semester abroad or short-term service trips. This effort encourages more of the same but also encourages students' abroad programs to orientate and engage students in issues of poverty and politics and to connect the service and learning that goes on over there with

the civic engagement they have started and will return to over here. When planning short-term service trips, we encourage programs to extend their stays from seven/ten days to twenty/thirty days, realizing the opportunity for learning, relationships, and service work and understanding all increase with longer stays. Furthermore, we look to engage and develop long-term partnerships with agencies and individuals who work with immigrant and other cultural organizations in this country. You don't need to get on a plane to have an international experience in America.

B) Pillars of Design

Intensity of experience

When we first gathered together through this grant we met each other, liked each other and told personal stories about our life's work and ourselves. Everyone was fully engaged and had extensive programs where students were making meaningful commitments. The one word that described everyone's activities was "intense". There was nothing random, or light or simple about the work that we were doing. Folks that were part of our work worked hard and long and were committed to staying the course. In the Bonner Program, students are expected to serve a minimum of ten hours a week in the community for the entire time they are in school. This may seem like a lot (and it is) and some even consider it excessive until we see that students are making similar types of commitment to ideas and organizations all the time whether it is through sports, student newspaper, the performing arts or student life. This commitment of hours is in contrast to the dabbling that often goes on as many programs create a setting of volunteer tourism, which has folks seeing without understanding and acting without feeling. We have claimed seriousness about our work, but that seriousness need not be dour, or gloomy or pessimistic. Instead, we must embrace joy or what Dorothy Day called "the duty of delight".

Integration of the two curriculums

The service that we do *outside* of the classroom (the co-curricular) has to line up with the education we are receiving *in* the classroom. This may sound simple, yet it is perhaps the single most challenging reality in all of this work. The idea of this effort came out of the fatigue and failure of good people who lead service initiatives that understood the need for quality education, reflection and discussion. Ask even the most committed student to read and write more in a co-curricular setting and you will have mutiny or fallout. The bewildering, yet hopeful part about this situation is that every school has courses already in the curriculum that teach and engage students around issues of poverty, politics and the globe. What we have done and what we are encouraging schools to do is to be intentional in identifying, lifting up and connecting the things that we learn about the work with the action that we take in the world. In doing so, we recognize that to be integrated (relevant, valued, integral...you choose the word) every academic course does *not* have to have a service component built into it. For example, at W&L students take a course in poverty in the spring, which they must take in order to participate in a summer

service internship, and then are encouraged to take a follow-up course in the fall. Neither course has a service requirement, but rather they address the theoretical, philosophical, political dimensions of poverty, grounding the students in this knowledge to inform their service.

A multiyear, sequential, and developmental approach

We have designed our service-work based on the academic calendar of semesters. Every semester, student's lives begin anew and there is usually significant transformation in terms of their schedule, demands, and focus. As a result, much of the service activity we plan lives by the quarter or semester system. When the class schedule changes, the service changes, or in many cases ceases to be because of conflicts and new demands. Directly addressing this reality, is one of the major challenges we face in this work. Our strategies and program for engagement have to transcend semesters and the academic calendar to include a multi-year engagement that has some flow to it. When we start and stop our service engagement according to the academic calendar, we revert to dabbling and volunteer tourism. What we need to do is a multi-year approach that is aware of the school calendar but not limited by it. A multi-year approach enables an academic journey to focus on civic engagement that parallels and intersects on a daily basis with the service and the study that students are doing on a daily basis.