Background material and strategy for Symposium and Leadership Coalition
Bringing Theory to Practice

CAMPUS CHANGE FOR LEARNING
LEADING A CATEGORY SHIFT IN LIBERAL EDUCATION

Objectives

    With the support of the S.Engelhard Center, the Charles Engelhard Foundation, the Christian A Johnson Endeavor Foundation, and the Lumina Foundation, the Bringing Theory to Practice Project (BTtoP) has invited forty-five colleges and universities to form a **Leadership Coalition.** The initial activity of the Coalition is this Presidents' Symposium.

    The objective in forming the Coalition is to encourage and support those institutions which are committed to providing successful models of how a campus culture focused on actively engaging students in learning can address the lives and the full dimensions of the intellectual, emotional, and civic flourishing of students. The objective of the Symposium is to call upon presidents as educators to lead the institutional efforts necessary to create and sustain such cultures for learning and to be supported in championing this as an institutional priority.

    The recent accomplishments of exemplary campus initiatives, often supported by grants from foundations underwriting the Symposium, and the research, publications, and encouragement of The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) suggest that a shift of priorities and resources within the institution could make possible a categorical change of emphases and the adoption of practices, expectations, and re-alignments of institutional resources and rewards. Doing so would emphasize engaged or high impact learning experiences for all students, the integration of education within and beyond the classroom, the elevation of expectations for each student's potential, and the realization of the full aspects of the student's development—cognitive, emotional, and civic. Where such a categorical shift occurs, the campus would deliver the opportunities, the resources and the culture that make the outcomes of liberal education most likely to occur for every student.

Strategic Background: Internal and External Conditions

    Now, in 2008, the confluence of multiple trends, campus achievements, research studies, and the successes of experimental projects is sufficiently powerful to create a context for maximizing efforts to initiate (or to extend current successes on many campuses now in progress) a "CAMPUS CHANGE FOR LEARNING".

I. AAC&U's Core Commitments and LEAP projects have argued for centralizing the role of liberal education's outcomes for all undergraduate students. Many of those beyond the campus, including professional and business leadership, are in agreement regarding the importance of strengthening liberal education and making it more central to higher education's role in our society. The Council for Aid to Education's (CAE) assessment project re critical skill development has been acclaimed as uniquely successful in assessing essential learning achievement by students. And the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) Project regarding engaged learning now documents the positive effects of "high impact" learning experiences. Since 2004, research studies and the initiatives taken on multiple campuses confirm that students who participate in identified and supported particular learning experiences have, and value, greater intellectual, personal, and social development.

First-year seminars, service learning courses, critical skill and writing intensive seminars, student involvement in faculty research and integrated research experiences where the research is community-based (including those where non-faculty experts or practitioners are involved), senior research and theses, and integrating capstone seminars, (linking disciplines or moving beyond disciplines to the discovery of applications) are ready examples of engaged, or "high impact", learning experiences. From all sources, the data are convincing. Students who have such experiences, especially multiple such experiences, are retained to graduation at higher rates, have higher grade point indices than had been projected from their entry qualifications, and report levels of satisfaction with their education far higher than those not having such experiences. Moreover, the evidence gives testimony to these effects holding at even higher rates for those students who had only modest entrance qualifications.

The regrettable evidence, however, is that when surveyed, few students report that they had any such experience during their undergraduate education! And perhaps worse, most students surveyed report not only that they didn't have such learning experiences, but had no expectation of having them when at college. Simply put, it would appear that many students fail to see the relevance of "high impact" learning experiences to what they judge that college should be about and what value it has.

II. The five years of the Bringing Theory to Practice (BTtoP) Project, particularly the evidence gained from the multiple year studies at numerous demonstration and intensive sites (where self-selection bias is countered) provide a preponderance of evidence for not only the positive effects of high impact (engaged learning) experiences cited above, but evidence that the effects and affects of such engaged learning experiences are linked not only to the cognitive, but also to the emotional (well-being) and to the civic development of students.

Moreover, from campus projects, evidence is now available to document that when engaged (high impact) learning pedagogies and experiences are significant

parts of the student's education, the positive effects and affects are intensified if some of those experiences have been infused with directly relevant content to the lives of students and to the challenges of disengagement they face. For example, at Georgetown University a math course uses group investigation to predict rates of alcohol absorption; a first year philosophy seminar explores self-realization as a function of the categories and limitations of knowledge; and a sociology service-learning course examines and compares depression intensity within homeless populations to that of campus populations. Evaluations of infused courses suggest that it is especially relevant that those experiences include not only faculty but counseling staff and off-campus experts or practitioners as part of an instructional "team."

III. Institutional mission statements champion the view that there are at least three core purposes of liberal education. Each is fundamental, as is their interrelatedness. The language characterizing each may vary, but the complexity of core purposes include: (a) the gaining of knowledge and discovery; (b) the fostering of well-being, health, and individual realization of students; and (c) the valuing of active involvement in the civic community as a necessary condition for learning and education. To assess our success in achieving these purposes, operational definitions and outcomes must be clear in order to connect purposes to the effects and affects exhibited in the learning, behavior, dispositions, choices and actions of students. If operationally defined, initial means of gauging success, including (but not limited to) metrics can be developed and field tested. When completed, those means can be made available for the use of academic departments or by the entire institution at little cost to the institution. This is the overall objective of the Outcomes Project which has now completed the second phase of its development with the support of the S.Engelhard Foundation and the BTtoP Project. The report covering the now completed first two phases of its work will be featured on the second day of the Symposium.

IV. Among the outcomes of undergraduate education that is truly transformative is the well-being of students. An education that has an objective of student well-being recognizes that the emotional and mental health of students is a dynamic element in their learning and development.

While many factors influence student success, national evidence (from multiple surveys) indicate that experiences of depression (sufficient to interrupt their academic work) are reported from nearly half of our students. At the clinical end of the depression spectrum, nearly 10% of today's students suffer from diagnosable forms of the illness. Associated patterns of substance abuse, disengagement behavior, and its all too frequent tragic consequences, are the realities on our campuses.

When counseling staff and faculty co-develop programs that identify, de-stigmatize, and directly affect student well-being through integrated academic approaches, including the pedagogies of engaged learning, the student's

development and well-being is positively affected. A transforming liberal education can have a significant impact on the flourishing of students. The BTtoP Project and The College Depression Care Partnership have documented this impact. The College Depression Care Partnership establishes procedures for identification, reducing stigmatization, and integrating effective treatment protocols for students on campuses. Now in place at eight universities and colleges, it will expand to include at least 40 institutions over the next two years.

An arbitrary segmentation prevails on most campuses (relegating some aspects of a student's development to the exclusive work of the faculty and other aspects exclusively to the work of a separate category of service providers). When that segmentation is suspended, and when an interdisciplinary and integrated approach is taken that recognizes the whole of student learning and development, the documented outcome of student well-being can be more than a claim in a mission statement.

V. Comparative cost studies have been completed which reveal the direct and indirect costs (expenses and personnel) institutions commit to addressing patterns of disengagement by students. Across categories of institutions and across the last five years, the cost studies document an acceleration of expenditures, although there has been a reduction of personnel lines committed.

Regrettably, many campuses acknowledge that those resources have primarily been used to address symptoms with marginal or modest results. The BTtoP Project has shown that institutions willing to address the causes of patterns of disengagement can effectively do so and be both more economical and more efficient in their efforts if they make the investments needed to emphasize engaged patterns of learning throughout the undergraduate experience and across disciplines. Doing so reinforces the academic strengths of the institution and its mission, positively alters the expectations of students and their families, and positively affects the full development of students.

Institutions may have been complicit in allowing patterns of disengagement to become chronically descriptive of campus norms and, unfortunately, of the expectations of many students and the public. The alternative of giving priority to engaged forms of learning is shown to be not only effective in altering patterns of disengagement, but doing so is both in the interest of the institution and its mission, as well as in the interest of the students, and of those who support them. The work of over 70 campus projects, at institutions of all types and sizes, models how the college or university can proceed, be initially assisted in its efforts, and then sustain those efforts with the commitment of its own prioritizing of resources.

Given the demands of scarce resources and the competitive environment in which colleges and universities function, it is a recognized challenge for the institution to prioritize its resources in order to create a context in which engaged learning

and its documented outcomes are dominant objectives of the institution, its faculty and staff, and its programs and opportunities.

While recognized as a challenge, it is also clear that the only sustainable path is to categorically shift priorities and internal resources. It is unlikely that individual campuses can meet the challenge and make the needed shift in priorities without collective support and encouragement, and without there being a shared perception in the academy of the value of doing so. Institutions offering leadership and successful models of affordable means for shifting priorities can provide examples that can be adapted to fit the cultures and financial realities of other campuses.

VI.   At many of our institutions, recent advances have been made in securing the connection between our academic programs and the civic engagement and development of our students. The civic component of the Core Commitments Initiative of AAC&U, Campus Compact, and many of the BTtoP Projects have helped colleges and universities foster multiple initiatives (usually service learning courses). Volunteerism and service work by faculty and students are now both valued and often expected, even when there are difficulties in defining the essential academic dimensions of the experience.

However, how these initiatives and practices are linked to greater civic development and engagement, what those terms mean and suggest to each constituency, both within and outside the institution, how we document the connection of learning to any obligation to be responsible to and for others (community), or how they actually strengthen democratic open society are much less clear within the academy. The "civic" purpose of liberal education—championed in the tradition of Dewey among others—requires, and now claims our attention. Elements of the current emphases include the exploration of the relation of our institutions to their communities—local and beyond. Some are seen and want to be seen as economic "engines;" others are breaking down long standing barriers splitting town and gown. Most are simply trying to see the nature and the possibilities in understanding what conceptual and practical linkages join the academic and the civic.

Strategic Means

The "Strategic Background" described above is far from complete. But the conditions and factors mentioned may be sufficient to inform a conversation among institutions, and within those institutions, regarding what categorical or transformative change might mean for the campus, whether identified changes could begin to occur, or could be carried more robustly forward from currently successful campus initiatives. The formation of the **Leadership Coalition,** and the Presidents' Symposium that initiates it,

is designed to help facilitate those conversations and to support institutions as they carry out plans to create or sustain campus cultures for learning.

As the 45 presidents (from diverse types and locations of institutions) attending the two-day Symposium, you form the nucleus of the Leadership Coalition. Each of your institutions will be supported with a planning grant from the BTtoP Project suggesting the significance of your own work. As members of the Coalition, you are asked to continue to demonstrate leadership by agreeing to:

- Hold relevant internal conversations at your institution regarding its collective commitment to strengthening (perhaps mainly reinforcing) its "campus culture for learning", recognizing that doing so may require change or the reordering of priorities.
- Establish an inclusive planning team and process that would put into place initiatives that fit your own context. The initial plan (or continued progressive steps) your campus develops will be presented at a national workshop session in 2009.
- A retrieval and dissemination conference will then occur in 2010, after your own initiative has been put into place. At that point, your campus projects will constitute the examples that will become the central features of a major publication to be available and widely distributed and promulgated as models of "Strategies for Change".

Appendix

As a helpful guide, a brief characterization of what is meant by "transformational education" when used in the educational research literature is attached here. It has been provided by Dr Lynn Swaner, Long Island University, and lead evaluator of the BTtoP demonstration sites. The Outcomes Project report which is contained in the materials you have received in advance of the Symposium (and which will be featured on the second day of the meeting) contains a full discussion of "transformational education".

Transformational Education

The traditional notion of academic learning (that is, acquiring general and disciplinary knowledge) as separate from personal and social development has given way to a more robust sense of integrative, *transformational learning* centered in the education and preparation of the whole student. The ultimate purpose of the College Outcomes project is to help define a transformational approach to college learning. It is based on the conviction that the core purposes of higher education go beyond providing useful and transferable skills contributing to students' intellectual growth to include their full development as individuals—their well-being and sense of civic purpose.

We define transformational learning as:

Developmental. During the college years, students experience fundamental shifts in their perceptions of self, others, and community. Changes in these three areas have profound implications for the ways students make meaning of their learning and experiences, as well as their functioning in relationship to other individuals and to society. These transformations are along the lines of what psychologists call "developmental" change, in which challenges in the environment cause individuals to move toward new – and generally more complex – ways of being in the world (Perry 1999; Baxter Magolda 2004; others). This developmental view provides a starting point for the work of the Outcomes Project and our understanding of transformational learning – that a college education can be both catalyst and medium for the journey toward complexity in knowing and doing across a range of domains (intrapersonal, interpersonal, moral).

Holistic. Research confirms that most college students gain substantial academic knowledge and skills through college participation, as well as identify and move toward a career path during their time at college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005). However, change during the college years is not limited to the academic and vocational realms, while these areas remain the focus of much of the academic enterprise. Rather, by crisscrossing the cognitive, affective, psychosocial, and behavioral domains, learning that is transformational encompasses multiple aspects of the self (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). This kind of learning is not limited to an acquisition of specific content or mastery of a set of skills, but is "deep" in engaging the learner's capacities for understanding, feeling, relating, and action.

Integrative. Transformational learning involves the integration of experience, reflection, and action in a learning cycle that is iterative rather than having a definite endpoint (Kolb, 1984; Hutchings & Wutzdorff, 1988). In a Deweyian sense, transformational learning is distinguished from other types of learning by being active and involving ongoing experimentation, rather than a passive absorption of information. In addition to fostering integration of these *learning processes*, transformational learning also integrates learning from *multiple settings*. Learning that is transformational resembles a latticework of meaning-making and application across students' experiences in and out of class, as well as on and off campus; it also transcends physical sites to integrate sources of learning, such as expert (faculty)-driven and peer/self-directed.

Contextual. Rather than occurring in the "vacuum" of the individual, transformational learning requires engagement with social contexts. Through transformational learning, students come to understand the interdependence of self and society, engage in the construction of shared meaning in collaboration with others (Wenger, 1998), and negotiate for shared action that benefits the common good (Jacoby, 2004). In this way, transformational learning ultimately develops civic capacities for democratic participation and engagement in community life.

Transactional. All learning involves interaction between the individual learner and the specific learning environment. This interaction occurs through continual, mutually-shaping "transactions" between the individual learner and the environment, as suggested by Bandura's (1986) concept of reciprocal

determinism. Transformational learning is more likely to occur when the potential of these transactions is maximized through the intentional design of learning environments. For example, certain pedagogies and practices are better suited to eliciting learning with the above attributes; in other words, they foster complexity in students' thinking, feeling, relating, and acting (developmental and holistic), as well as create connections between students' learning experiences and with social contexts (integrative and interactive). An environment that capitalizes on these approaches is more conducive to transformational learning, as opposed to an environment that is unintentional or "piecemeal" in its approach to student learning. Any success achieved by the latter is often a function of chance and, more importantly, such an environment ultimately fails to harness its transactional potential for learning that is transformational.

In view of this last attribute of and condition for transformational learning, the College Outcomes project seeks to identify outcomes that are *evidence* of transformational learning. We call these outcomes the **transformational learning outcomes**.

(**Note:** this is another term we might be able to use vs. non-cognitive, psychosocial, etc. which fail to reflect the holistic nature of transformational learning as described above)