Feature

Zone 3 Tickets and Belonging

By Chad Berry, Academic Vice President and Dean of the Faculty, Goode Professor of Appalachian Studies, and Professor of History of Berea College

Customer award programs and differential pricing give airline passengers a range of ticket categories. First-class and frequent flyers, of course, get the best treatment and the deepest sense of belonging. At the other extreme, Zone 3 ticket holders are treated as second- or third-class passengers and likely feel neither appreciation nor belonging. It is unfortunate that this metaphor easily applies to higher education. Ideally, all students should feel as if they come to college with a first-class ticket in hand, no matter their socioeconomic class, race, gender, or any other identifying characteristic, but in reality, many are left feeling that they do not really belong in the institution that admitted them.

Belonging was a key concept when Berea College was founded in 1855, in a slaveholding state, by ardent abolitionists and radical reformers expressly to educate female and male, and black and white, students together. As such, it became the South’s first interracial and coeducational college. That was bold in 1855, but the need continues today, because while potential is universal, opportunity is not. Consider, for example, that national degree-completion rates for students from the lowest income cohort (less than $34,000) have only increased by three percentage points since 1970—from 6 to 9 percent—compared to large increases among the wealthiest students.1 As Frederick Douglass wrote, “To deny

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Editor’s Note

Two Weeks’ Worth of Reflections

By Jennifer O’Brien, Project Manager and Coordinator of Strategic Planning and Development, Bringing Theory to Practice

These words are personal reflections from two days, and then two weeks, after the presidential election. As such, they are raw and emotional. They indicate my personal beliefs and ideals, and not those of the BTtoP project or our partner, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U).

Our sincerest hope as a project team is that the emotions and ideals of your own reflections continue to translate into action and meaningful engagement on your campus and in your community. Higher education’s promise as an enduring institution of democracy continues to be ours to fulfill.

On and before Election Day, I understood engaged learning, civic engagement, and well-being to be important. I understood these concepts to be central not only to BTtoP’s work of the past decade, but also to the heart of all of higher education.

The way I felt on election night and in the days after illustrated how sheltered I was, how I had taken our democracy, and perhaps these concepts, for granted. I spent the better part of my twenties with Barack Obama as the president of the United States. My time growing with him in office and watching his family as the first family made me greedy and complacent. Given that I am inclined toward cynicism, I was pleasantly surprised by how the Obamas’ integrity, their intellect, and their poise in the realm of American politics made me more patriotic.

My complacency carried into the 2016 presidential election. Intellectually, I understood that the confidence I felt about the presumed outcome was risky. Yet, given the words and actions I witnessed by Donald Trump, I was overcome with a sense that there was one logical and ethical path for our country to take. And my media bubble (partisan and nonpartisan podcasts, Twitter feeds of major national news outlets, etc.) confirmed it.

It became immediately clear to me as election night wore on that my confidence (or rather, arrogance) did not make space for me to truly examine anything beyond my own values and needs. There are so many factors that contributed to the outcome of our elections, and I will not discuss them here. But I do believe that there was a gap between what I thought I knew or understood about the electorate and what I actually did know or was willing to admit—probably because it so threatened my own core beliefs and values.

In over ten years at BTtoP, I have never been more convinced that engaged learning, civic development and engagement, and attention to student wholeness and well-being are more than just important to higher education—our dedication to them is our moral imperative as a society, and they are capable of securing the future of our fragile democracy.

Engaged learning has the potential to liberate us from (increasingly) sheltered and bubble-wrapped realities. Civic development and engagement pushes us to explore what we learn with those who have different identities and lived experiences from our own, and it reveals how our differences make the tapestry of our society richer. And the need for attention to wholeness and well-being are more than just important to higher education—our dedication to them is our moral imperative as a society, and they are capable of securing the future of our fragile democracy.

“We are calling upon our resilience and our grit to meet the fear, the anxiety, and the anger with positive energy and action.”

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enced for nearly a year and a half. We are calling upon our resilience and our grit to meet the fear, the anxiety, and the anger with positive energy and action.

**What Does This Mean for Students?**

Do you remember what it felt like to be a new student on campus? Maybe you didn’t live on campus. Maybe you were the first in your family to go to college and you felt enormous pressure to succeed (and to pay those bills). Maybe your parents paid your way and you were unaware of the extent of your privilege. Maybe you were a conservative student on a small liberal campus and afraid to admit it.

Each of these simplistic profiles represents a piece of a student on a campus somewhere. What bridges the diversity of these profiles is the reality that each has the identity of “student.” All students have somehow ended up pursuing a higher education that promises to broaden their horizons; stretch their potential; and provide opportunities for them to succeed and fail, and to learn from both experiences. But each student is a complex individual with intersecting identities and lived experiences that will affect these successes and failures as well as the student’s interactions with peers, faculty, staff, and the broader community.

As facilitators of this educational enterprise, we owe it to these students to attend to the diversity of their own intersecting identities and to the ways in which those identities intersect with those of community members; with curricula, campus designs, and programs; and with institutional priorities. Even if it weren’t enough to attend to these factors simply because the integrity of the enterprise demands it, the consequences of not doing so have never been plainer than in the rash of recent clashes seen on campuses due to issues of identity politics and free speech, to name just two examples.

Democracy is rich only because of the diversity of its voices, and we need to work with students (both in the classroom and by leading by example) to help them understand and work through what that means. We cannot presume to know another person, or another group, and we must learn to understand other spaces, other voices, and other lived experiences as if they are as relevant to our existence as our own.

I am not talking about making room for intolerance, hatred, racism, sexism, or any other pernicious social construction. I am talking about making space for the fact that we are a rich democracy, and a young one. We need to nurture our democracy by respecting it, and respecting it means respecting all of its constituents—particularly students, who hopefully will become engaged participants.

And we must make this a most basic part of what a higher education means and offers—coming to know oneself, and respecting ourselves, the diversity of our shared community, and the fragility of our democracy enough to know and value each other.

**In This Issue**

We hope to provide a few examples of how institutions can attend to student intersectionality and well-being. In the issue’s feature piece, Chad Berry shares the incredible story of Berea College, an institution of higher education that charges no tuition. Like all institutions, Berea College has a unique context—but as an institution of higher education, with a mission not dissimilar to those of many others in very different contexts, what it achieves is nothing short of incredible. And part of its strength and success is connected to viewing students as whole, intersectional beings.

Ann Strahm and Erin Littlepage at California State University-Stanislaus share their experience organizing a seminar through a regional educational partnership bringing together participants from K-12 schools, California community colleges, and California State University systems to discuss the imposter syndrome—“a fear of being found out or discovered as stupid or unworthy”—which affects the success, retention, and well-being of students, particularly students who are female, of color, working class, and/or come from disadvantaged families. Providing the time and space for these various constituencies to come together to discuss how such a syndrome is systemically maintained is a powerful way to interrupt the cycle by sharing information and best practices.

And finally, BTtoP Director Don Harward writes about the potential of inclusive campus dialogue to bridge differences in higher education. Harward explores what it is like—or could be like—to empathetically understand, and know, another. Harward writes, “A dialogue is not a guarantee of achieving harmony”; it is an opportunity to expand our collective understanding, make room for respecting the value of another, and share in the goal of higher education as an institution of public good that sustains a civic society.
education to any people is one of the greatest crimes against human nature.”

Because the Berea community believes that students’ incomes should not dictate their outcomes, the college stopped charging tuition about 125 years ago and requires its 1,600 students to meet financial eligibility require-
ments. Consequently, 98 percent of domestic students are Pell Grant eligible, and Berea’s 120 international students—hailing from countries from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe—would also qualify if non-citizens were eligible for Pell Grants. Almost 40 percent of students are of color, and Berea welcomes students from forty-five states and seventy countries.

Fifty-seven percent of its 2016 entering class had an expected family contribution of $0, and the average student comes from a family of four with annual income of less than $28,000; therefore, the typical entering student not only pays no tuition, but is responsible only for a little more than $1,000 for housing, meals, and fees for the year.

“Bereans believe there is dignity in all labor—mental as well as manual—and there is also an important learning dimension to labor. For this reason, staff are known as General Faculty, and teaching faculty are referred to as College Faculty.”

Berea’s Great Commitments:

• To provide an educational opportunity primarily for students from Appalachia, black and white, who have great promise and limited economic resources.
• To provide an education of high quality with a liberal arts foundation and outlook.
• To stimulate understanding of the Christian faith and its many expressions and to emphasize the Christian ethic and the motive of service to others.
• To provide for all students through the labor program experiences for learning and serving in community, and to demonstrate that labor, mental and manual, has dignity as well as utility.
• To assert the kinship of all people and to provide interracial education with a particular emphasis on understanding and equality among blacks and whites.
• To create a democratic community dedicated to education and equality for women and men.
• To maintain a residential campus and to encourage in all members of the community a way of life characterized by plain living, pride in labor well done, zest for learning, high personal standards, and concern for the welfare of others.
• To serve the Appalachian region primarily through education but also by other appropriate services.
Place, race, class, and/or gender are among the most common intersectionalities of all Berea students, and Berea’s mission, manifest in the college’s eight Great Commitments, is key to the college’s work to enhance students’ well-being at Berea and after graduation. What are the practical ways of serving the underserved and realizing such a mission? First, of course, we must hire faculty and staff who are eager to support the mission. As one of seven federally recognized Work Colleges, all students work ten to twelve hours a week on campus, supervised by many staff and faculty. Bereans believe there is dignity in all labor—mental as well as manual—and there is also an important learning dimension to labor. For this reason, staff are known as General Faculty, and teaching faculty are referred to as College Faculty. All employees have obligations regarding learning, student success, and well-being. First-year students in our work program earn a salary of about $1,500 during the academic year, which in many cases can help pay the cost of housing and meals, preventing borrowing. Some students return a portion of these earnings to their families for utilities or food; more than half even give a portion of these earnings back to the college through payroll deduction. Already, they are paying forward their educational opportunity by engaging in philanthropy.

We often think metaphorically about our educational work, dividing it into the bridge in, the bridge through, and the bridge out. For example, as part of the work to bridge high school and college, we house visiting students and families in a comfortable, residential facility free of charge so a campus visit is economically possible. A summer Berea Bridge program for sixty new students, chosen by lottery, prepares these students for engaged learning and embeds leadership and engagement in the first-year class; first-to-second year retention of these Berea Bridge students is currently 93 percent. A family engagement counselor works closely with prospective students and families in order to alleviate financial concerns and begin financial aid verification.

The “bridge through” efforts ensure that retention and graduation rates are high. Berea’s overall first-to-second-year retention rate, at 86 percent last year and 84 percent this year, is remarkable for the population it serves. Faculty and staff, of course, are committed advisors and mentors. More than 40 percent of Berea students study abroad because the institution heavily subsidizes opportunities to make it possible. Free medical and counseling services further facilitate whole-person education, and this academic year the college has opened a free dental clinic for students since many have never had such care. In 2012, Berea built a green residence hall, earning Living Building Challenge Petal Certification, and created a quality enhancement plan (a plan developed to improve student learning or the environment that supports student learning in a measurable way) that focuses on eight dimensions of wellness: emotional, financial, intellectual, occupational, physical, social, spiritual, and sustainable.

Helping students design and construct their bridge out of Berea into the world is where our most intense focus has been. Our internship office facilitates 250 paid internships each year, allowing students to pursue their passions and interests unencumbered by financial constraints. Such internships are an invaluable way to assist students as they make their way into lives beyond Berea. A career development office also provides funds for professional clothing, test preparation, graduate school visits, and consultations.

Christian Osvaldo Flores represents the complexity of intersectionality and the effects of the bridge metaphor on student well-being. He is twenty-two, was born in Michoacán, Mexico, and was raised in Georgia when his family brought him to the United States for better opportunities. He’s undocumented, gay, first-generation, Mexican, and male. He’s also president of Berea’s Student Government Association.

“I automatically felt welcomed [here],” he said. “I didn’t know Berea was so open to differences, where people were interested in learning about hardships and identities, in my case being undocumented. With all my identities, there is someone else that I could relate to. So that makes me feel like part of the community. I can find myself in other people’s identities here, and I can grow as a result of learning about others.” He was part of the first Berea Bridge cohort, and he is benefiting from the bridges through and out.
While it does not feel very affirming to be the last to board a flight, living at the poverty line comes with many real difficulties. Berea’s students share pasts replete with marginalization, abuse, and injustice, but their resilience helps them transcend those disadvantages. Bereans work hard—students, faculty and staff together—over four years to facilitate a life of healing, wholeness, and satisfaction, bringing students from the periphery to the center and along the way helping them find their voice, their passion, their purpose, and (we hope) their version of the good life joined with service to the public good.

References

**Zone 3 Tickets**

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Some conferences are about intersectionality; some conferences are about student well-being.

This conference is about the integration of both.

*Conference Facilitation by L. Lee Knefelkamp, Teacher’s College, Columbia University*

**Early Registration Deadline:** February 23, 2017

**Regular Registration Deadline:** April 6, 2017

For more information visit [www.bttop.org](http://www.bttop.org)
Campus Highlight

California State University-Stanislaus: “Do I Belong Here?”

Unmasking the Impostor Syndrome

By Ann Strahm, Associate Professor of Sociology, and Erin P. Littlepage, Assessment Specialist in the Office of Academic Programs, Both of California State University-Stanislaus

What am I doing here? Am I smart enough? Do I really belong in college? Can I fake it 'till I make it?

Impostor syndrome is an invisible barrier. Put simply, it is an unwarranted “fear of being found out or discovered as stupid or unworthy”4 that can impede an individual’s ability to accept and internalize accomplishments. This phenomenon particularly affects first-generation students who often struggle to form a sense of belonging on college campuses. Students from poorer and less educated families tend to have cumulative disadvantages, including the internalization of messages about who they are in relation to the broader, more affluent, dominant group. This causes feelings of inadequacy, which reinforce the feelings of not belonging.

The literature suggests that manifestations of psychological barriers to success, such as the impostor syndrome, are felt most acutely in students who are female, of color, working class, and/or come from disadvantaged families. At California State University-Stanislaus (Stanislaus State), the impostor syndrome likely affects our largely first-generation (76.8 percent), low-income (60.5 percent), minority (69.1 percent), traditionally underrepresented minority (58.6 percent), and female (66.7 percent) student population.5 Stanislaus State students are primarily from the region surrounding the campus, which is one of the more impoverished areas in the United States.6

“Non-cognitive barriers related to a sense of belonging and ability negatively affect students’ overall experience, retention, and success.”

Why Impostor Syndrome Matters

Non-cognitive barriers related to a sense of belonging and ability negatively affect students’ overall experience, retention, and success. These negative effects are significant not only for the Stanislaus State campus, but also for the region (where 15.5 percent of adults in Stanislaus County hold a four-year degree). Therefore, in February 2016, supported with funding from a BTtoP well-being seminar grant, Stanislaus State organized a panel discussion as part of the broader Stanislaus Education Partnership, a regional learning and practice community committed to regular communication, shared data, and activities aimed at easing students’ transitions between educational segments (K-12, California Community College, and California State University systems).

Seminar participants included K-12 administrators as well as counselors, advising professionals, and faculty from Modesto Junior College. Also present was a cross-divisional audience from Stanislaus State, including faculty, advisors, administrators, staff, and students for a total of thirty participants (excluding panelists). At this event, Stanislaus State sociology faculty facilitated a panel discussion on the impostor syndrome, opening with an administration of the Clance IP scale to evaluate participants’ levels of impostor syndrome.7 Tallied responses demonstrated a range of rankings, with those indicating first generation status ranking highest on the scale. The panel, made up entirely of first generation faculty and former students, shared their own experiences in an effort to reveal implicit biases, stereotype threats, and gatekeeping present at all levels of the education system.

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Mitigating Impostor Syndrome across Systems

Students who feel like they belong have greater persistence, more positive learning experiences, and better overall outcomes. The faculty panel led participants in a discussion of potential “dos” and “don’ts” in an effort to alleviate the impact of the impostor syndrome. The panel noted that college faculty can teach first-generation students, working-class students, and students of color about their own histories and biographies and provide students with rigorous intellectual journeys. Faculty should also recognize that first generation students may learn differently, and they should embrace what this population brings to the proverbial table rather than treat them using a deficit model. The panelists also facilitated discussion about how K-12 personnel can work to disrupt the development of the impostor syndrome, noting that schools need to work to find mentors for students who might have shared experiences, histories, and backgrounds; create safe spaces for students who are historically marginalized; and advocate for every student.

Participants at the event discussed potential interventions, including the proposed development of workshops geared toward providing resources and training for faculty. Members of the Stanislaus Education Partnership also recognized the potential of existing and planned interventions to support mitigation of the impostor syndrome. Work has already started on developing “One-Stop Caravans” in local high schools. These caravans will include financial aid counseling and academic advising as well as a “Near Peer”—a current Stanislaus State or community college student who graduated from the high school—who will act as a model and resource for first-generation students. Parent outreach will also be included, as the caravans will provide resources on financial planning/support and engage parents in discussions regarding college life and expectations.

Conclusion and Next Steps

First-generation college students, working-class or poverty-class college students, women, and/or students of color often feel inadequate—like they are frauds who don’t deserve to be members of an intellectual or campus community. The organizers of this well-being seminar hope that this discussion was a first step in helping those with the most influence on students’ lives at school understand the need to stop the socializing processes that serve as vectors for the development of impostor syndrome. Participants were surveyed following the event and responses indicated the desire for continued conversations on this topic. Stanislaus State hopes to organize additional regional conferences in the future.

References

9. This model presumes students of color and poor students come from cultural backgrounds that impede student learning and achievement. This model presumes that white, middle-class forms of knowledge production and attainment are not only functional, but are superior to all others. For basic information on this model, please see: Samuel Y. Song and Shirley Mary Pyon, “Cultural Deficit Model,” Encyclopedia of Educational Psychology, ed. Neil J. Salkind (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2008).
Colleges are asked how they will bridge the widening gulfs of difference among groups identified by race, class, and gender, and to rectify the imbalances of attention and opportunities historically given to underserved or marginalized populations. Yet, how they are to proceed remains for many an acute and formidable challenge.

A recommended strategy to begin to help bridge difference has been to hold inclusive campus dialogues involving multiple campus and off-campus constituencies. Doing so could lead to the emergence of new emphases and altered expectations. Responses to those altered expectations could occur in the form of institutional change. The success of the strategy would depend on a campus culture which welcomed inquiry and valued open consideration of what underlies prevailing opinions or beliefs. The strategy calls for a true dialogic exchange of narratives and life stories regarding difference—candid conversations about persisting intolerance, racism, and class privilege. In dialogue, participants could learn about the lived experiences and perspectives of another to bridge great differences by connecting their own experiences to the experiences of those considered to have different group identities—to come to know what it’s like to be another—to be a member of a group to which we do not belong—or that we speak only to those like us—may be widely voiced; but are they true? Is a group’s identity fixed, or always changing? Is it clear what is meant by “me,” “us,” and “them”? Can someone else know what it’s like to be me, with my experiences, my memories, and my impressions? If the answer to that question is “no”—that no one can know what it’s like to be me—does that equate to “no one can know what it’s like to be another”?

There is a separate relevant claim regarding group identity that also impedes reconciling difference. It is a claim of privilege about who is entitled to characterize, to name, a group’s identity. The Black Lives Matter movement takes a stand against this sort of attempt at characterizing black identity. Black voices, black lives, and the lives of other suppressed groups have not historically “mattered”—their identity, instead, was defined and named for them, an act considered “justified” by the hegemonic dominant group solely based on their dominance. What values and principles should justify the privileging of any voice of group identity? Could “fairness” justify privileging heretofore suppressed voices?

Examining such questions, even just raising them for discussion, can initiate an inclusive campus dialogue before it moves to the particulars: to the prevailing divisiveness and tensions regarding identity politics on campus, to whether intersectional and suppressed identities are given physical space or voice, or to whether the faculty can sanction avoidance yet insist that students risk confrontation.

A dialogue is not a guarantee of achieving harmony. However, by beginning with and frequently returning to questions about knowing and identity, the dialogue escapes capture by personal or silos of interest or by unexamined preconceptions, prejudice, or beliefs. Everyone has access to answering the questions; all participants have a perspective, even if emphases and terminology vary. Participating in dialogue allows participants to recognize that coming to know, to understand, is a relational activity of engagement. That relation—understanding—involves both self-awareness of being in such a
relation and appreciating (sometimes discovering) what you bring. And it also involves empathy—recognizing and respecting the integrity and identity of another with which one stands in relation.

The dialogue can make evident that understanding what it’s like to be another can have its source in attending to, listening to, and engaging with another’s life stories, their art and culture, their actions, and their narratives that are abundant and available over place and time. It can also make clear that we discover, engage, and even create our own life stories, and in doing so, we come to empathetically understand the shared narrative of our own groups. As we identify features from the life stories and actions of others that are analogous with those of our own, we are seeking access to their identity and to providing access to our own vulnerability to be known.

Grouping terms—such as race, gender, and class—have no fixed denotation. They designate nothing—in general or in specific. They are constructions; however, their use has charged connotations that have long molded behaviors and attitudes. Group identity is much like a fabric with an ever-changing weave of colors and intensities, not a fixed reality. So if a group’s identity is to be known, its pursuit has to be richer and more textured than simply citing terms with no identifiable referents. And it is on our campuses that dialogic exchange can be used to initiate such textured pursuit.

We can know what it’s like to be other, to speak to those other than ourselves; we can empathetically understand another. We can use the power of metaphor and establish the basis of resemblance that can justify analogical reasoning and discovery. We have access to evidence and reason, and we can learn from listening to life stories and the histories and voices they contain. Empathetic understanding makes moral imagination possible by engendering respect for the value of others and shared interest in a common good. Coming to know, to empathetically understand, is an act of liberation—the escape from Plato’s allegorical cave—which would, if not escaped, make learning and justice false hopes. The message of the allegory is that education—moving from self-belief (or impressions) to knowledge of another—is the path to illumination and freedom.

Education is also the route to “knowing thyself.” Empathetic understanding of others is a condition for knowing oneself. They are necessarily connected. The reality of that connection is made explicit in education. It is the basis for an appeal to institutions to begin conversations that bridge even great divides, alter expectations, participate in guiding change, and make solidarity possible.

**Bridging Difference**

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**BTtoP Awards 31 Campus Dialogue Grants for Realizing Higher Education’s Greater Purposes**

We are excited to announce 31 Campus Dialogue Grants ranging from $3,500 to $15,000 awarded in January to a diverse set of colleges and universities across the country. The awarded grants, chosen from a meritorious group of over 230 proposals, will provide support for one-year projects (calendar year 2017) based around a set of thematically integrated gatherings or “dialogues” involving a core group of diverse campus constituents. Including required matching funds, the dedicated amount for these projects totals over $450,000.

While the designs of the proposed dialogues and the rosters of intended dialogue participants reflect each institution’s unique campus culture and attentiveness to current issues (be it a consortia effort among three downtown universities working with local organizations to hold civically engaged dialogues about the future of their city; a small liberal arts school partnering with a high school to hold conversations with students on diversity and democracy; a consortium of community colleges using the arts as a pathway to address policy barriers to underserved stakeholders; or an opportunity to understand the university as a sanctuary campus), ultimately these projects will facilitate the greater purposes of higher education: learning and discovery, well-being, civic engagement, and preparation for living meaningfully in the world. BTtoP’s hope is that these dialogues will lead to a change in the narrative around higher education from one that views a college education primarily as a pathway to a better job to one that views higher education as a pathway to a better life. To learn more, visit http://www.bttop.org/grants-funding/awarded-grants.
In Brief: BTtoP News and Notes

News

Great to See You at the AAC&U Annual Meeting
The team at BTtoP was thrilled to present four sessions at AAC&U’s 2017 Annual Meeting in January in San Francisco. We hope you found our sessions, “Risk Taking, Freedom, Safety, and Well-Being: Dimensions of an Engaged Campus Culture”; “Reimagining Higher Education for the New Majority”; “The Whole Student: Intersectionality and Well-Being”; and “BTtoP Campus Projects: Well-Being, Civic Engagement, and Student Agency” to be engaging, timely, and helpful for your own thinking and campus practice.

Thank you to all who were able to join us at the sessions and at our reception on Thursday evening—we cherish the opportunity each year to catch up with colleagues and friends of the project, old and new! To learn more about our Annual Meeting sessions and speakers, visit http://www.bttop.org/news-events/events/2017-aacu-annual-meeting-bttop-sessions.

Simon Fraser University Publishes Article on Student Well-Being in Learning Environments
Alisa Stanton, David Zandvliet, Rosie Dhaliwal, and Tara Black—all of Simon Fraser University—recently published “Understanding Students’ Experiences of Well-Being in Learning Environments” in volume six of Higher Education Studies, a journal of the Canadian Center for Science and Education. The article provides a qualitative exploration of students’ lived experiences of well-being in learning environments within a Canadian post-secondary context. A semi-structured focus group and interview protocol was used to explore students’ own definitions and experiences of well-being in learning environments. Findings illuminate several pathways through which learning experiences contribute to student well-being, and they also offer insight into how courses may be designed and delivered to enhance student well-being, learning, and engagement. Read more at http://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/hes/article/view/61858.

Liberal Learning as Quest for Purpose: A New Book from Bill Sullivan
Longtime BTtoP friend and colleague Bill Sullivan has published a new book on the undergraduate experience: Liberal Learning as a Quest for Purpose. Sullivan currently serves as senior scholar at the New American Colleges and Universities and visiting professor at the Centre for the Study of Professions at the Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences in Norway. This new work is an important piece in our common cause for revitalizing the undergraduate experience. The book suggests teaching and learning practices stemming from a three-year research effort developed by participating campuses; introduces the Program on the Theological Exploration of Vocation (PTEV), a model that promotes understanding of contemporary problems facing undergraduate education; and includes strategies that encourage discussion of efforts to reimagine the higher education experience. To obtain a copy, visit https://global.oup.com/academic/product/liberal-learning-as-a-quest-for-purpose-9780190499242?cc=us&clang=en&#.

Dominican College Debate 2016 Engaged 150 Delegates and 1.8 Million Social Media Users
Leading up to Election 2016, Dominican College of California hosted the College Debate, a national, non-partisan initiative to empower young voters to identify issues and engage peers in the presidential election. The debate engaged around 150 delegates from all fifty states and DC, the CD16 hashtag (#collegedebate16) reached 1.8 million social media users, and the additional press coverage produced 65 million media impressions (a measurement of the delivery of online advertisements).

The student delegates identified the issues that matter most to millennial voters and developed questions reflecting their concerns, which were delivered to the presidential candidates for the fall debates. Questions included the following: “How would you restructure governmental assistance programs for the unemployed or impoverished to obtain self-sufficiency?”; “How do you plan on supporting Syrian civilians without creating further conflict with other political actors?”; “What will you do to reduce the recidivism and mass incarceration rates in communities where poverty and violence are prevalent?”; and “How will you ensure quality education to areas of socioeconomic disadvantage both in terms of K-12 and access to higher education?”

In response to concerns that have arisen following the election, higher education partners that are involved with CD16, including BTtoP, have joined Dominican University in coordinating resources and efforts to support students, faculty, and staff on campuses across the country. For more information, visit http://collegedebate16.org/.
The Bringing Theory to Practice Project (BToP) is an independent national effort. It is funded by the Charles Engelhard Foundation of New York and functions in partnership with the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) in Washington, DC.

The Charles Engelhard Foundation is a New York-based foundation whose mission focuses on projects in higher and secondary education, cultural, medical, religious, wildlife, and conservation organizations.

The S. Engelhard Center is a nonprofit public charitable foundation; its mission is to support projects and initiatives that affect greater and sustained commitments by educational institutions at all levels to provide effective means of addressing the intellectual, emotional, and civic development of today’s students in preparation for claiming their positive future.

Now Available from Bringing Theory to Practice

Well-Being and Higher Education:
A Strategy for Change and the Realization of Education’s Greater Purposes

Well-Being and Higher Education is a book about well-being and its multiple connections to higher education—and why those connections matter. The thirty-five-piece volume of essays and provocations responds to the current landscape of challenges higher education faces today and the need to preserve and revive the institution’s role of looking beyond itself to a greater good.

For more information: www.bttop.org/resources/publications