Djibril Diakite offers a pointer to Daniel LaPrell in Alumni Gym. “Practice dribbling any time you can. Use the advantage of quickness against big defenders.”

**Feature**

**Perceiving Atmospheric Pressure**

*By Susan Kassouf, Program Officer, The Endeavor Foundation*

*In order for a living being to be stable ... there must be a tension of forces which we do not ordinarily perceive, any more than we perceive (because its action is multidimensional) atmospheric pressure. —Marcel Proust*

With ever-greater pleasure, I have observed how many projects in higher education—Bringing Theory to Practice (BTtoP) foremost among them—call on us to consider students as “whole persons,” to think about learning as a relation between self and other, and to create opportunities for engagement between campuses and the communities beyond them. These ways of framing some of the purposes of higher education can craft incredibly powerful experiences for students, faculty, and community members.

And yet, I have felt the twinge of some discomfort with these ways of framing and wondered if there are insights to be gained by considering other possibilities. For example, in addition to being aware of “self” and “other” as ways to engage with the world (with other students, community members, persons who occupy different spaces on the planet or have lived in different eras), what if students learned about the many and diffuse forms of “we” that two or more people necessarily create, of the ways in which the world is already a part of them and they are part of it?

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Might the notions of “self” and “other” perpetuate a fiction—sometimes necessary—that we are separate from so much and so much is separate from us? Might such a fiction allow us to imagine that we are not part of the natural environment, the repair of which our species must tend to urgently, for example? That we are somehow outside of historical or national or even biological continua, separate from the living world around us or even the universe itself? While our immediate sense of consciousness can encourage this sense of separateness, I am not certain that this is the whole story. As Proust, a master of the uncharted territories of our diffuse selves, suggests, what if we became more attuned to the tensions of multidimensional forces that we do not ordinarily perceive, and risked some of our stability in the process?

Much of our useful, and perhaps stabilizing, rhetoric about the need for community engagement posits the campus as an ivory tower, with the real world taking place all around it. Although the bricks and mortar of this imaginary edifice can at times feel very real, we have to work hard to ignore all evidence to the contrary. From the community members who attend classes to the local staff who make the institution run, from the food served to the most basic infrastructure like a functioning sewage system, no institution is ever an island unto itself.

Some of the more exciting, rigorous, and rewarding efforts taking place on college campuses today embody this sense of inseparability, of the world being always present, of “self” and “other” being far more integrated than we might acknowledge. Many efforts, often student led, that address environmental sustainability dwell on the moments in which the so-called outside world and the campus are one. Researching and implementing ways to reduce a school’s carbon footprint, creating campus farms that feed towns and gowns alike, questioning college endowments’ investment in fossil fuels—these sustainability concerns are changing colleges’ intellectual, environmental, and financial impacts in ways that go far beyond any neat set of boundaries.

Likewise, some civic engagement and public scholarship at community colleges, supported by BTtoP, calls attention to the way in which the community is already the campus, and vice versa. Other efforts in contemplative practice, also connected with BTtoP, point toward ways that students (and everyone else) might begin to slow down, breathe, and pay more careful attention to our multiple, intermingling, ever-shifting inner and outer worlds.

As Proust and other writers so exquisitely remind us, much of what the arts can teach us relates to the revelatory ways in which they plumb intimacies across time and space, between past, present, and future, between the ordinary and extraordinary, encouraging us to risk the perception of a little more atmospheric pressure.

Editor’s note: The Endeavor Foundation has been a generous supporter and encourager of the Bringing Theory to Practice Project since its inception. We at the Project are grateful for such thoughtful colleagues—our work has been immeasurably enhanced by their meaningful engagement.
In the midst of the many questions, concerns, and criticisms leveled at higher education, have you ever wondered what you would do if you were education czar for a day? Where would you focus to create change that matters? Would you focus on issues of cost? Of technology? Of access? All are important issues to be sure. But if given one chance to create real change, would you focus on these more narrow issues? Would you not instead go for the big one—the purpose of learning, the foundation of higher education? Would you not attend to what lies at the very heart of higher education, the source of our passion and the foundation of our colleges and universities? If so, then you should consider how to advance the interactive and mutually reinforcing practices of transformative learning, personal well-being, and civic engagement.

Some view their work at the institutional level, seeking excellence broadly throughout the institution; others address change from the perspective of particular goals they seek to achieve.

ideas, examples of important change, and stories that will inspire you to act can be found in the latest monograph in the BTtoP Civic Series: Civic Engagement, Civic Development, and Higher Education (available for free download and for purchase in print; bulk discounts are available at bttop.org.) In this monograph, presidents, deans, and faculty members reflect on the patterns of change they implemented in their institutions, the issues and opportunities these changes created, and why these changes have been crucial to their institution’s success and to the role of higher education in the world of today and tomorrow.

This monograph is not a scholarly analysis of the civic—that is already available in many books (e.g., Transforming Undergraduate Education; The Handbook of Engaged Scholarship vols. 1 and 2) and journals (e.g., The Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning). Nor is it a report of the status of the field, such as provided by AAC&U’s 2012 publication A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy’s Future. Rather, the authors were asked to provide essays that would provoke their readers to thought and action.

These presidents, deans, and faculty members describe work at their own colleges and universities, at institutions ranging from community colleges to research universities, public
Inspire and Inform
(continued from page 3)

and private, across the United States and the world; from a new institution able to build “from scratch,” to those working within systems with long-held traditions. Some view their work at the institutional level, seeking excellence broadly throughout the institution; others address change from the perspective of particular goals they seek to achieve. All of these authors were chosen for this monograph because of their visionary leadership, because they are defining institutions and building programs on the cutting edge of the challenges and opportunities we face, and because, in so doing, they uphold the fundamental tenets of intellectual rigor, personal well-being, and civic engagement.

For example, looking back on nine years of transformation at Syracuse University, Nancy Cantor and Peter Engholt take us through their journey of growth and development, asking themselves what would a research university be like if they took seriously the admonition of the Kellogg Commission to reinvent their institution for “the times that are emerging instead of the times that have passed”? Paul LeBlanc, president of Southern New Hampshire University, provides insight into a different area: the growing—and controversial—world of online education. LeBlanc’s institution hosts one of today’s fastest-growing online programs, and his essay provides a glimpse of his institution’s work, ideas, and plans. Richard Miller, president of the Olin College of Engineering, faced a completely different challenge: to lead the charge posed by the Olin Foundation to create an entirely new institution, grounded in a new culture for higher education. Imagine questioning everything from the ground up—the structure, the curriculum, the personnel, the environment, the institution’s philosophy and founding principles—and then implementing your design. It is an amazing story with many surprises, and the lessons to be learned are not limited to engineering education. These are just a few of the perspectives presented from the institutional level. Taken together, they provide exciting lessons of scale, implementation, and change.

Other authors look at the broad accomplishments achieved from seeking particular goals, such as building a first-year writing program for a diverse student population, finding ways to link global and local learning, or organizing programs to meet the often disparate goals and schedules inherent when working in our neighborhoods and with our communities. Still other pieces consider how to organize and where to house the civic work of the institution, how to make it work, and what the trade-offs of engaging in this work might be. Much inspiration, hopefulness, and good ideas will be found in the experience of these authors and the ideas presented.
Bringing Theory to Practice has enjoyed a meaningful partnership with AAC&U for our entire history—while independent in every respect, our connection with the nation’s leading organization of liberal education initiatives has been integral to our larger impact.

Over this period of partnership, approximately $10 million of grant support has been extended to campuses through four separate requests for proposals. We have dedicated time and resources to putting on major conferences and events that featured campus initiatives and achievements; designing and carrying out specialized research projects; and writing and publishing books and monographs. There have also been multiple occasions on which BTtoP initiatives have been featured in professional, disciplinary, and higher education organization conferences, newsletters, journals, and videos for general audiences.

But the marketplace of ideas is crowded, and BTtoP has frequently received the reaction that “We did not realize what you were about!” Or, “We have only recently recognized your work’s effect and want to be involved.”

BTtoP’s involvement in the 2015 Centennial Annual Meeting of AAC&U will mark a clear step in BTtoP’s emergence and presence.

BTtoP Sessions and Events at the AAC&U Centennial Annual Meeting

**Wednesday, January 21**

- **2:45-4 p.m.**: Flourishing and Well-Being: Essential Dimensions of Higher Education’s Core Purposes, Values, and Promise
- **4:15-5:15 p.m.**: Mobilizing Bold Leadership for America’s Global Future. Featuring BTtoP cofounder Sally Engelhard Pingree

**Thursday, January 22**

- **10:45 a.m.-12:15 p.m.**: Making Higher Education Whole: Reconnecting Liberal Learning to Well-Being
- **2-3 p.m.**: Strengthening Diversity and Social Justice in Higher Education
- **3:15-4:15 p.m.**: Facilitating Well-Being: Institutional Structures, Policies, and Priorities
- **5-6:30 p.m.**: BTtoP Reception (see our Save the Date on the next page!)

**Friday, January 23**

- **8:45-10 a.m.**: High-Impact Practices and Student Flourishing: The Evidence We Have and the Evidence We Need
- **10:30-11:45 a.m.**: How It Can Be Done: Making Well-being a Core Element of Institutional Purpose
Our objective is to make a compelling case for altering the predominant conversation and re-ordering the priorities now characterizing most of higher education.

From the Director
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Promise.” Moreover, over the subsequent two days, five BTtoP sessions will be featured—presenting research findings, highlighting campus-based practices, and documenting the connections in theory, purpose, and practice among intentionally designed learning opportunities, civic engagement, preparation for meaningful work, and well-being. We welcome your attendance and involvement!

The presentations during these sessions will be bold. This is an opportunity to have the direct attention of thousands of attendees who work in higher education—and, through them and the media, the attention of the public. Our objective is to make a compelling case for altering the predominant conversation and re-ordering the priorities now characterizing most of higher education.

For many, what BTtoP argues and supports is obvious. For some, the BTtoP agenda may seem radical and threatening—or at least “not what higher education should do.” And for others, “this is the agenda that defines us as educators.” For all, it is both timely and essential to have the robust conversation that the agenda implies.

Bringing Theory to Practice invites you to

Save the Date for an informal reception

at AAC&U’s Centennial Annual Meeting
on Thursday, January 22, 2015
5:00-6:30 p.m.
Washington, DC

Our annual reception is an opportunity for friends and colleagues to engage in discussion, the sharing of ideas, and connections with each other and with the BTtoP team on current and future directions of our work together.

We also hope you will stop by our additional five featured sessions throughout the Centennial Annual Meeting this year. Check out our schedule on the web: www.bttop.org.

Don, Sally, Barry, Jill, Ashley, Jennifer and Dylan
News

BTtoP’s New Website
Check out our newly designed and streamlined website: www.bttop.org! Click around for information about grants, publications, events, and general Project news.

BTtoP Releases Final Volume in Civic Series: Civic Learning and Teaching
Civic Learning and Teaching, edited by Ashley Finley, appeared as the fifth and final volume in BTtoP’s Civic Series of monographs broadly exploring the civic mission and practice of higher education. Civic Learning and Teaching contributes to an understanding of why the integration of civic engagement in higher education—both inside and outside the classroom—matters for students, faculty, campus professionals, and community members. From service learning and study abroad to alternative spring break and community-based research, most colleges and universities have created opportunities for students to have “civic experiences.” This monograph suggests that when campus and community leaders work intentionally to connect students’ civic experiences with learning and teaching, students’ learning becomes more fluid, more transformative, and more likely to inspire civic thought and action. Available now for download (http://www.bttop.org/sites/default/files/public/CivicTaL%20FINAL.pdf) and purchase (http://secure2.aacu.org/store/detail.aspx?id=BTPCIVIC5).

Simon Fraser University Wins Award for BTtoP Grant-supported Project
Simon Fraser University received an innovation award from the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services for its BTtoP-supported “Well-being in Learning Environments” project—highlighted in our fall 2013 newsletter. Read the article on our website to learn more about this fascinating project.

Pitzer College Publishes E-book Anthology of Community Engagement Scholarship
Pitzer College’s Community Engagement Center has published an e-book anthology highlighting the wide range and powerful depth of the work of many of its community-engaged teachers and scholars. The anthology includes insightful reflections from practitioners as well as informative strategies for implementing community-based education, research, and service programs. The e-book can be found here: http://www.pitzer.edu/anthology

Collaborations and Travels

BTtoP Director Don Harward Participates in “Reinventors” Video Series
Don Harward was featured in a 90-minute video roundtable session as part of a series called “Reinvent the University for the Whole Person.” The roundtable engaged a group of thought leaders from inside and outside the academy over a six-episode series, using interactive video as the platform. The full roundtable, as well as shorter selections, can be viewed here: http://reinventors.net/roundtables/next-skill-sets/.

National Evaluator Ashley Finley Presents BTtoP Work
Ashley Finley, Bringing Theory to Practice’s national evaluator, presented the keynote presentation at Webster University’s “Global Citizenship Collaboratory” event (May 19–20) and lead two workshops with faculty and staff. Her presentation, titled “Examining the Effects of Engagement: High-Impact Practices and Flourishing,” is online at bttop.org. She also facilitated sessions at the Bonner Foundation’s High-Impact Practices Institute (July 7–8) that focused on helping campus teams implement and assess civic and community-based projects.

Gallup-Purdue Index Report
BTtoP Project Associate Dylan Joyce attended the debut presentation of the Gallup-Purdue Index Report (available for download: http://www.gallup.com/strategicconsulting/168791/gallup-purdue-index-inaugural-national-report.aspx). Executive Director of Gallup Education Brandon Busteed summarized data intended to measure long-term holistic outcomes related to over 30,000 college graduate’s lives, including their workplace engagement and financial and social well-being, and the connection of those elements to their undergraduate experience. Notably, only 3 percent of graduates strongly agreed they had experienced six measures of support from faculty and experiential and deep learning in an undergraduate context. AAC&U’s Wilson Peden also covers the study on AAC&U’s blog: http://blog.aacu.org/index.php/2014/09/02/cost-quality-and-well-being-a-closer-look-at-the-gallup-purdue-index.
The Bringing Theory to Practice Project (BTtoP) 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.

S. Engelhard Center is a non-profit 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.

Publications Available By Bringing Theory to Practice

The Civic Series
Bringing Theory to Practice’s The Civic Series is composed of five monographs that raise questions and provide perspectives on fundamental issues about the civic mission of higher education.

Civic initiatives are ongoing in democratic societies, but only some of them become papers which invigorate the intellectual climate and promote public discussion. We believe that if each successive wave of visionary thinkers to share their boldest ideas about the civic mission of higher education, it might contribute to theory and practice.

Transforming Undergraduate Education
This resource features chapters from twenty-four scholars, educational leaders and practitioners as well as ten case studies of campuses that have been recipients of Bringing Theory to Practice support. Project co-founder and director Don Harward contributed Part 1 and edited the book; national evaluator Ashley Finley both authored a chapter and co-edited the case studies.

For more information: www.aacu.org/bringing_theory/publications.cfm