

## Transforming Higher Education Through and For Democratic Civic Engagement: A Model for Change

By John Saltmarsh, [Emily M. Janke](#), and Patti H. Clayton

Saltmarsh, J, Janke, E., & Clayton, P. (2015). Transforming higher education through and for democratic civic engagement: A model for change. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* (22)1, 122-127.

**Made available courtesy of Michigan Publishing:**

<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.3239521.0022.119>

**\*\*\*© The authors. Reprinted with permission. No further reproduction is authorized without written permission from Michigan Publishing. \*\*\***

### **Abstract:**

Twenty years ago, reflecting on the possibilities for service-learning (SL) to help re-envision higher education, Zlotkowski (1995) considered the question, “Does service-learning have a future?” and concluded “nothing less than a transformation of contemporary academic culture,” a transformation of higher education institutions into “engaged campus[es],” was required for an answer in the affirmative to be assured (p. 130). In the intervening two decades, the term “engaged campus” has moved to the very center of national conversations about the future of service-learning and community engagement (SLCE); and much work has been done to describe the characteristics of such a campus. How, though, does such transformation of academic institutions happen? And, what does “institutional transformation” mean in the realm of SLCE? We suggest that for community-campus engagement to flourish in the future, SLCE practitioner-scholars should inquire into these questions and design our work in light of what we are learning and we offer a model to help guide that process.

**Keywords:** higher education | service learning | civic engagement

### **Article:**

**\*\*\*Note: Full text of article below**

## Transforming Higher Education Through and For Democratic Civic Engagement: A Model for Change

**John Saltmarsh**

*University of Massachusetts Boston*

**Emily M. Janke**

*University of North Carolina at Greensboro*

**Patti H. Clayton**

*PHC Ventures*

Twenty years ago, reflecting on the possibilities for service-learning (SL) to help re-envision higher education, Zlotkowski (1995) considered the question, “Does service-learning have a future?” and concluded “nothing less than a transformation of contemporary academic culture,” a transformation of higher education institutions into “engaged campus[es],” was required for an answer in the affirmative to be assured (p. 130). In the intervening two decades, the term “engaged campus” has moved to the very center of national conversations about the future of service-learning and community engagement (SLCE); and much work has been done to describe the characteristics of such a campus. How, though, does such transformation of academic institutions happen? And, what does “institutional transformation” mean in the realm of SLCE? We suggest that for community-campus engagement to flourish in the future, SLCE practitioner-scholars should inquire into these questions and design our work in light of what we are learning; and we offer a model to help guide that process.

### The Engaged Campus

Zlotkowski’s essay mirrored a shift from a focus on SL per se to a more encompassing perspective on the “engaged campus,” of which SL would be a part. In 1994, Russell Edgerton, the president of the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE), had called for the organization’s national conference to focus on this theme; “a useful starting point for thinking about ‘The Engaged Campus,’” he suggested, “is to realize that all of the critical tasks we do – teaching, research, and professional outreach—need to change if we are truly to connect with ... the larger community” (p. 4). Two years later Boyer (1996) captured this institutional focus in his framing of the “scholarship of engagement.” By the

end of the 1990s, Campus Compact had embraced this vision of the engaged campus and conceptualized its work as a pyramid that required attention to the whole campus and to multiple constituencies across campus and in communities. Soon thereafter the Compact produced a set of “Indicators of Engagement,” which includes such items as administrative and academic leadership, internal and external resource allocation, faculty roles and rewards and professional development, and community voice (Hollander, Saltmarsh, & Zlotkowski, 2001).

A number of institutional assessment tools were created in this period (e.g., Furco, 1999; Holland, 2000, 2006; Keckes, 1997), all of which include levels of commitment to community engagement expressed in such domains as mission, structures, leadership, and student/faculty/community involvement; these have been used widely to guide campuses in developing SLCE and advance research. The Carnegie Foundation’s Elective Classification for Community Engagement, which was launched in 2006, provides what is arguably the most influential contemporary articulation of the *processes* – “partnership[s] of college and university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors” – and the *purposes* – “to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good” – that define the engaged campus (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2015). The emerging national agenda over the past two decades has clearly been one of fundamental institutional change. Institutions that are transforming into engaged campuses and thus have SLCE principles and practices embedded within their identities and throughout teaching, research, and service provide fertile grounds for students, fac-

ulty, staff, alumni, and community members to hone the habits and skills required for healthy communities and a vibrant democracy.

Transformational Change:  
Deep and Pervasive

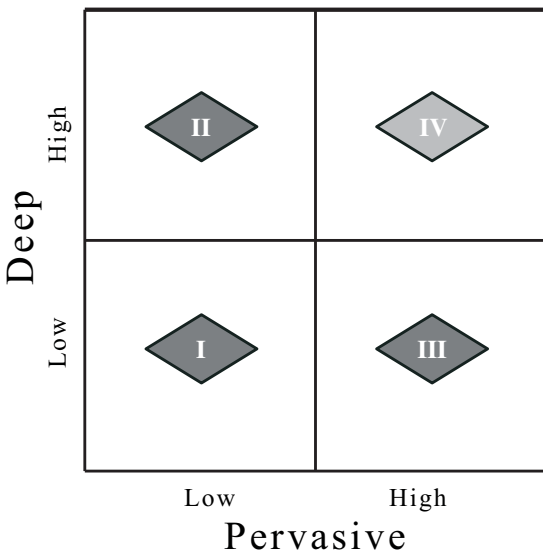
Considering the challenges to ensuring the future of SL, Zlotkowski (1995) noted that efforts to advance the pedagogy at the time did not include “a long-term strategy to engage or transform the college or university itself” (p. 130). Within a few years, Eckel, Hill, and Green, writing from the perspective of organizational development, published their influential study, *En Route to Transformation* (1998), which examined what transformational change would look like on a campus and what evidence was emerging to indicate that such was indeed happening. One key arena of possibility for transformation, they suggested, is community-campus engagement. Their key finding was that “transformation does not entail fixing discrete problems or adjusting and refining what is currently being done” (p. 4) but instead “requires major shifts in an institution’s culture – the common set of beliefs and values that creates a shared interpretation and understanding of events and actions” (p. 3). Specifically, “transformation (1) alters the culture of the institution by changing select underlying assumptions and institutional behaviors, processes, and products; (2) is deep and pervasive, affecting the whole institution; (3) is intentional; and (4) occurs over time” (p. 3). They offer a 2 x 2 matrix (see Figure 1 for modified version) to highlight the goal of change

that is both deep and pervasive (Quadrant IV).

According to Eckel, Hill, and Green (1998), a change that is *deep* “profoundly ... affects behavior or alters structures ..., imply[ing] a shift in values and assumptions that underlie the usual way of doing business” (p. 4). “The deeper the change the more it is infused into the daily lives of those affected by it” (p. 4). Importantly, such change “requires people to *think* differently as well as *act* differently” (p. 4). In the context of SLCE, we see depth as a quality of practice. Deep engagement includes relationships grounded in reciprocity, mutual respect, shared authority, and co-creation of goals and outcomes (see Hicks, Seymour, & Puppo and Siemers, Harrison, Clayton, & Stanley in this collection of essays). It is asset-based, acknowledging that legitimate knowledge exists within communities as well as the academy and starting from the resources and strengths each collaborator brings to the table rather than focusing on deficiencies (see Bauer, Kniffin, & Priest and Pisco in this collection of essays). It moves beyond transactional exchanges to generate new, transformative possibilities among partners (see Stanlick in this collection of essays). Deep engagement positions all partners – students, faculty, staff, community members – as co-educators, co-learners, and co-generators of knowledge; and it involves professional development that builds the capacity of all partners to undertake it in high quality, contextualized, and continuously improving ways. Deep engagement evokes “thick” understandings of and approaches to both the processes – from critical reflection and assessment (see, for example, Ash & Clayton, 2009) to partnerships (see, for example, Janke, 2013) – and the outcomes – from individual and organizational learning to community and systems level change – of SLCE. In summary, a commitment to depth changes almost everything about how we conceptualize and undertake SLCE; it is substantially counternormative to the default ways of framing and practicing SLCE that are ingrained in both the academy and the community and to the largely taken-for-grant identities, roles, and relationships we otherwise bring to community-campus collaboration.

While depth is a key element of institutional transformation, it is not sufficient. As Eckel, Hill, and Green (1998) point out, “it is possible for deep changes to occur within specific units or academic departments without being widespread throughout the institution” (p. 4). Their second dimension, *pervasiveness*, “refers to the extent to which the change is far-reaching within the institution” (p. 4). “The more pervasive the change, the more it crosses unit boundaries and touches different parts of the institution” (p. 4). In the context of SLCE, for example, there could be a few faculty in a few departments, all implementing high quality SLCE in their courses and

Figure 1  
*Transformational Change: Deep and Pervasive*  
(modified from Eckel, Hill, & Green, 1998, p. 5)



all conducting high quality community-engaged research with community partners without such practice being common or encouraged across the institution – in effect inhibiting, silencing, or simply isolating the work of engaged academics outside of these pockets of change. Select students, such as those in Honors or leadership programs or those in service-related living-learning communities, could have ready access to well-designed, impactful SLCE opportunities, while at the same time many other students remain unaware of or unable to take advantage of them – raising concerns about whether we are in fact challenging or enshrining systems that underlie social injustice (see Hickmon in this collection of essays). Individual units could have revised their promotion and tenure guidelines to honor community-engaged scholarship but be exceptions to the norms that govern most units – creating problematic inequities and inconsistencies in faculty rewards. In all such cases, the underlying transformation at the institutional level has not, in fact, occurred. In summary, pervasiveness of SLCE – from mission, budget, and senior leadership to the daily work of staff and students on campus and in communities – is necessary if high quality work is to move beyond the experience of the privileged few in isolated pockets that lack the capacity to transform institution-wide cultures and systems.

### Transformational Change: Deep, Pervasive, and Integrated (DPI)

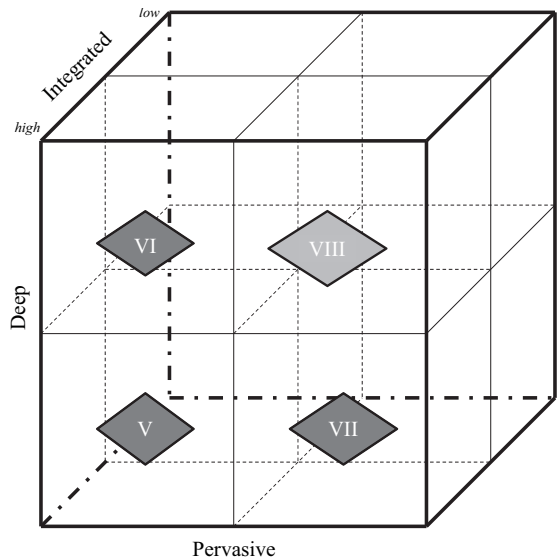
Eckel, Hill, and Green’s (1998) model thus posits quadrant IV – high depth and high pervasiveness – as the goal for institutional change initiatives. In a conversation several years ago about the requirements for institutional transformation around community-campus engagement, then Tennessee State University President Melvin N. Johnson suggested that a third dimension – *integration* – be added. He argued that engagement can be deep and pervasive but remain compartmentalized; in other words, it can still be conceptualized and enacted in ways that fail to problematize or offer an alternative to the academy’s entrenched hierarchical and siloed nature and thus fall short of transformational.

For example, it is possible for an institution to have high quality SLCE wherein community-university partnerships are asset-based, co-created, and mutually beneficial (deep) and practiced within many academic departments and co-curricular units (pervasive) without the various practitioners being aware of one another, let alone working intentionally together as collaborators in a broader, institution-level strategy for engagement. Deep and pervasive do not, on their own, insist on replacing otherwise hierarchical schisms

between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, among disciplines, and among teaching and research and service with collaborations that value all contributions across campus as critical; and they may not necessarily link SLCE intentionally and strategically to the full range of institutional priorities. Working incidentally and coincidentally results in lost opportunities to share ideas, build and strengthen relationships and networks, leverage resources, and, in numerous forms and fashions, coalesce around culture change.

What we call “The Johnson Cube” (see Figure 2) expresses this important development in our understanding of the meaning of and requirements for institutional transformation; the integration axis comes forward to create a cube, rendering quadrant VIII the site of high depth, high pervasiveness, and high integration. While campuses located in quadrant IV of the earlier, two-dimensional model may be there in part because they have achieved depth and pervasiveness in ways that are, in fact, also integrative, we have found value in making this third dimension explicit as a guide for intentional institutional transformation initiatives.

Figure 2  
*Transformational Change: Deep, Pervasive, and Integrated (DPI)*



This third dimension problematizes any tendency for SLCE to remain within its own realm as an end unto itself and thus fail to align with, inform, and influence how institutional priorities are enacted. Integration foregrounds the synergies that can result from holistic and interdependent approaches to institutional priorities, highlighting the importance of aligning and intertwining SLCE with other campus initiatives such as access and inclusion, citizenship

and leadership development, internationalization, and assessment, to name a few.

As a leading example, SLCE clearly – if often only implicitly – has linkages with an increasingly diverse campus community and the interests of incoming students, staff, and faculty in teaching and scholarship that help to advance social justice (for further discussion of this example, see Cantor & Englot, 2014; Sturm, Eatman, Saltmarsh, & Bush, 2011). Integration calls on us to pose a range of questions related to the actual and potential relationships between these otherwise often compartmentalized issues. For example, how is SL (curricular and co-curricular) framed around and designed to support student access and success? How are faculty from underrepresented groups actively recruited and retained in ways that honor the commitments they often bring to community-engaged teaching and scholarship? An integrative approach to SLCE in the context of such questions attends to the intersections of such factors as (a) growth of ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity among the student body and increased numbers of students from historically underserved groups; (b) the role of high impact educational practices and relationships with diverse faculty and staff in the academic success of students from these groups; (c) interest in community-engaged, inclusive, interdisciplinary pedagogical practice and research among female faculty and faculty of color; (d) difficulties retaining faculty from historically underrepresented groups; and (e) calls for revisions to promotion and tenure and annual performance review policies so as to honor community-engaged faculty work. Integration suggests that if campuses are going to take student success seriously, if they are going to take diversity seriously, and if they are going to take new forms of knowledge generation seriously, then they need to take SLCE seriously (Saltmarsh, 2012).

### Operationalizing the DPI Model of Transformation

As we think about what is needed for the future advancement of SLCE, then, we call for further inquiry into the possibilities for moving in the direction of institutional transformation that is deep, pervasive, and integrated. One arena for such change that warrants particular focus in the coming years is the development of campus infrastructure (see Dostilio & McReynolds in this collection of essays). Centers or offices for SLCE have become common on campuses since the mid-1990s, and their identities and administrative homes have shifted considerably over time, with increasing connections to research, economic and workforce development, faculty devel-

opment, and student access and success (see Welch & Saltmarsh, 2013 for an overview of the growth of centers). Given that we seek deep or high quality (asset-based, reciprocal, critically reflective, impactful, continuously improving), pervasive (spread into all corners and dimensions of the life of the campus), and integrated (aligned and intertwined with the full range of campus priorities) SLCE, what questions do we need to ask in determining whether and how to create institution-wide centers or offices? Using the example above, how do we operationalize the interconnections between diversity and community engagement as we think about infrastructure? Do we continue to have offices with staff responsible for these various initiatives working in different parts of campus but in a more intentionally collaborative fashion? Or do we need to embed SLCE within these other offices and integrate SLCE principles and practices within existing structures?

Further, what sorts of challenges or tensions arise in the development and work of centers that catalyze and support deep, pervasive, and integrated SLCE? How are the principles of high quality SLCE upheld when integrated with those of other pedagogies and initiatives? How do we honor and encourage innovation and grassroots activity in SLCE while also creating structures and policies that articulate our best understandings of high quality, interconnected practices and partnerships? What are the possibilities for navigating potential trade-offs between depth and pervasiveness, especially in the early years of a center or in an institutional context that values either quality or quantity to the exclusion of the other? These and many other questions await consideration by SLCE practitioner-scholars whose work can be understood, fundamentally, as about the transformation of the academy to fulfill its potential and its promise as an agent of democracy.

### DPI as Democratic Civic Engagement

Institutional transformation thus takes on a particular meaning in the context of community-campus engagement: that of democratic civic engagement. SLCE that is deep, pervasive, and integrated by definition – as described above – encompasses an “intentional and explicit democratic dimension” that engages all of us in “the public culture of democracy” (Saltmarsh, Hartley, & Clayton, 2009, p. 11). The fundamental change at stake is that of a paradigm shift from the normative *technocratic* framing of and approaches to community-campus engagement toward a *democratic* orientation.

Accordingly, a truly transformed engaged campus – or one on that journey – no longer defines itself as *apart from* broader communities, providing expertise

to those without the resources or capacities to understand and resolve public problems in one-way transmission of knowledge or, at best, two-way exchanges of value. Rather, the process of transformation leads the institution to a view of itself as a *part of* communities, as one of many players involved in networked, multi-directional systems for co-creating knowledge, policy, and practice. Institutional transformation means power-shared (democratic) rather than hierarchical (technocratic) relationships, asset-based (democratic) rather than deficit-based (technocratic) orientations to one another (especially community members and students), and being and working *with* (democratic) rather than only doing *for* (technocratic) communities. "It is this democratic framework of civic engagement that holds the promise of transforming not only the educational practice and institutional identity of colleges and universities but our public culture as well" (Saltmarsh, et al., 2009, p. 14).

### Note

We express our appreciation to President Melvin N. Johnson for the insight that led to the creation of the Johnson Cube and to Kristin Medlin for the design of the Cube's visual image.

### References

- Ash, S. L., & Clayton, P. H. (2009). Generating, deepening, and documenting learning: The power of critical reflection in applied learning. *Journal of Applied Learning in Higher Education, 1*, 25-48.
- Boyer, E. (1996). The scholarship of engagement. *Journal of Public Service and Outreach, 1*(1), 11-20.
- Boyte, H. (Ed.). (2015). *Democracy's education: Public work, citizenship, and the future of colleges and universities*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.
- Cantor, N., & Englot, P. (2014). Civic renewal of higher education through renewed commitment to the public good. In J. Reich (Ed.), *Civic engagement, civic development, and higher education: New perspectives on transformational learning* (pp. 3-12). Washington, DC: Bringing Theory to Practice.
- Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. (2015). Elective Community Engagement Classification, first-time classification documentation framework. Retrieved from [http://nerche.org/images/stories/projects/Carnegie/2015/2015\\_first-time\\_framework.pdf](http://nerche.org/images/stories/projects/Carnegie/2015/2015_first-time_framework.pdf)
- Eckel, P., Hill, B., & Green, M. (1998). *On change: En route to transformation*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.
- Edgerton, R. (1994). The engaged campus: Organizing to serve society's needs. *AAHE Bulletin, 47*(1), 2-3.
- Furco, A. (1999). *Self-assessment rubric for the institutionalization of service-learning in higher education*. Berkeley: Service-Learning Research and Development Center, University of California at Berkeley.
- Holland, B. A. (Fall, 2000). Institutional impacts and organizational issues related to service learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, Special Issue*, 52-60.
- Holland, B. A. (2006). Levels of commitment to community engagement. Adapted from Holland, B. A. (1997). Analyzing institutional commitment to service: A model of key organizational factors. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 4*(1), 30-41. Retrieved from <http://www.elon.edu/docs/e-web/org/nccc/HollandMatrix.pdf>
- Hollander, E., Saltmarsh, J., & Zlotkowski, E. (2001). Indicators of engagement. In L. Simon, M. Kenny, K. Brabeck, & R. Lerner (Eds.), *Learning to serve: Promoting civil society through service-learning* (pp. 31-50). Norwell, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Janke, E. M. (2013). Organizational partnerships in service learning: Advancing theory-based research. In P. H. Clayton, R. G. Bringle, & J. A. Hatcher (Eds.), *Research and service learning: Conceptual frameworks and assessment* (pp. 573-598). Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Kecskes, K., & Muyliaert, J. (1997). *Benchmark worksheet for the Western Region Campus Consortium Grants Programme*. Bellingham, WA: Western Washington University.
- Saltmarsh, J. (2012). Targeting the intersections of diversity, engagement, and student success. In D. W. Harward (Ed.), *Civic provocations* (pp. XII-XIV). Washington, DC: Bringing Theory to Practice.
- Saltmarsh, J., Hartley, M., & Clayton, P. H. (2009). *Democratic engagement white paper*. Boston: New England Resource Center for Higher Education.
- Saltmarsh, J., & Hartley, M. (2011). *To serve a larger purpose: Engagement for democracy and the transformation of higher education*. Philadelphia: Temple Press.
- Sturm, S., Eatman, T., Saltmarsh, J., & Bush, A. (2011). *Full participation: Building the architecture for diversity and public engagement in higher education* (White paper). New York: Columbia University Law School, Center for Institutional and Social Change.
- Welch, M., & Saltmarsh, J. (2013). Current practices and infrastructures for campus centers of community engagement. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement, 17*(4), 25-55.
- Zlotkowski, E. (1995). Does service-learning have a future? *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 2*(1), 123-133.

### Authors

JOHN SALTMARSH ([john.saltmarsh@umb.edu](mailto:john.saltmarsh@umb.edu)) directs the New England Resource Center for Higher Education (NERCHE) at the University of Massachusetts Boston and is a faculty member in the Leadership in Education department. He leads NERCHE's partnership with the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching to administer the Community Engagement Elective Classification. His recent work includes the volume "*To Serve a Larger Purpose*": *Engagement for*

*Democracy and the Transformation of Higher Education*, co-edited with Matthew Hartley.

EMILY M. JANKE (emjanke@uncg.edu) is an associate professor in Peace and Conflict Studies and the founding director of the Institute for Community and Economic Engagement at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Her teaching and scholarship focus on community-university partnerships, institutional change in support of community-engaged scholarship, campus- and system-wide data management and metrics, the role of communication in collaboration, and academic institutions as members of partnership networks focused on local and regional impact.

PATTI H. CLAYTON (patti.clayton@curriculumengagement.com) is an independent consultant and SLCE practitioner-scholar (PHC Ventures), a senior scholar at UNCG and IUPUI, and a visiting fellow at NERCHE. She works with campuses to envision and establish SLCE infrastructure, apply for and leverage the Carnegie Community Engagement Elective Classification, and build capacities among all partners for excellence in SLCE and practitioner-scholarship. Her current interests include democratic engagement, co-learning among all partners, and civic learning.