
The Talloires Network and the MacJannet Prize for Global Citizenship

Explorations on sustainable and innovative leadership

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Higher education does not exist in a vacuum. Institutions of higher learning should serve as vibrant and dynamic anchors to their communities and to society. Civic engagement and community service should be inextricable from research, teaching and learning. The Talloires Network is an international coalition of higher education institutions founded on such a vision. It is because of this vision that the MacJannet Foundation approached the Talloires Network in 2009 to establish the MacJannet Prize for Global Citizenship. Following in the footsteps of founders Donald and Charlotte MacJannet, the international Foundation is dedicated to providing pathways for individuals and institutions to use their skills for the good of their communities. The MacJannet Prize recognizes exceptional student community engagement initiatives at Talloires Network member universities and contributes financially to their ongoing public service efforts.

To date, the MacJannet Prize has attracted 495 submissions by community engagement projects, all of them innovative initiatives and representative of regional diversity of the Network: 102 nominations have been received from North America, 95 from Africa, 86 from East Asia and the Pacific region, 69 from Latin America and the Caribbean, 66 from Central Asia, 48 from South Asia, 22 from the Middle East and North Africa, and 6 from Europe. Of those 495 nominations, 38 have been awarded either first, second, or third place and 19 received honorable mentions.

The nomination pool also represents an array of topics, which can be grouped by area of focus. The majority of the initiatives address education-related issues (127) including but not limited to: illiteracy, access to education for marginalized communities, and language. In some initiatives, institutions collaborate with outside non-profit organizations or government agencies on community development work (125). Other topics include: disease prevention and health promotion (63), social justice and human rights (58), environment and sustainability (46), community building (28), poverty alleviation (16), and 'other' or a combination of topics (32).

While the MacJannet Prize is a financial award, the program yields many intangible – but equally important – impacts, as the articles in this edition indicate. Firstly, the prize encourages champions of community engagement to pause and reflect on what they have accomplished and provides opportunities to evaluate, improve, and learn from similar projects. Secondly, the international recognition that comes with the prize supports and, in some cases, provides the validity needed to gain ground either within the faculty or the university. Thirdly, that validity can nurture the confidence to seek other sources of recognition or funding. Lastly, the prize signals the beginning of a type of university-community engagement that is central – rather than peripheral – to the institutional mission.

TRANSFORMING UNIVERSITY CIVIC AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This special edition journal of *Gateways: International Journal of Community Research and Engagement* features articles from five first-place MacJannet Prize winners and one second-place winner. The six articles offer a glimpse of university civic engagement projects in six countries created to help those who have been denied such opportunities. They highlight the complexity of civic engagement efforts in different institutional environments and regions of the world and provide insight into the pedagogy and practice of engagement. Further, the articles highlight the many challenges associated with this type of work, not only with scaling up the initiatives but with institutionalizing them. Finally, these accounts serve as a reminder of the critical importance higher education institutions have in the success of these initiatives and the dedication of the individuals who lead them.

The authors of the articles all have qualities that leaders in civic engagement should possess. They are engaged scholars who have championed the work against all odds and believe wholeheartedly in the students and their potential for becoming the transformational leaders of tomorrow. They have challenged the status quo and overcome obstacles to do good in this world. The authors believe this engaged work is mutually reinforcing with their research and teaching and they view it as an essential part of their scholarship. They persuasively demonstrate that engaged work, or service, should have equal or even greater weight than the two other pillars of higher education – teaching and research. The authors, and arguably all those who participate in the initiatives, believe local knowledge is not in competition with scholarly knowledge. A number of the articles illustrate the importance of understanding the perceptions students have of the community, of recognizing there is much to learn outside the classroom, and of the university's role in critically rethinking what it means to research, teach and learn today.

The authors represent six countries each with a unique context; all but one represent the Global South. The Global South countries featured in this edition are Chile, Argentina, Mexico, Malaysia and Pakistan. This is significant because most of the current understanding on community civic engagement has arguably come from universities in the Global North or ‘developed countries’, often discounting the legacy of community engagement from the Global South or ‘developing countries’. The elevation of Global South voices in this edition highlights one of many reasons the Talloires Network and the MacJannet Foundation are longtime partners – both entities believe in creating ways to raise the visibility of those who are underrepresented. The one article that represents a developed country, University of Technology Sydney, in Australia is an example of what a university with more resources can do to elevate the voice of the voiceless and provide them with platforms for growth.

This journey into engaged higher education begins at the Universidad Veracruzana (UV) with the article, ‘University vinculación: A two-way strategy for sustainable development and academic relevance’. UV, located in the southeastern state of Veracruz, Mexico, is one of several Latin American countries where students are constitutionally mandated to complete at least 480 social service hours to receive a university degree. While engagement is required for all Mexican universities, UV views it as part of its institutional DNA. UV firmly believes higher education was borne out of society’s needs, and thus owes itself to society. This means any good that comes out of the ‘*casa de estudio*’ (education home) must be for the benefit of society. This profound commitment to society is present throughout the article, in which the authors display a deep understanding of the university’s role in improving not only the communities that surround them but society as a whole. The following article, ‘Learning and service at the University of Buenos Aires: A theoretical framework guiding the implementation of Educational Social Practices’ discusses a similar challenge. Although civic engagement is not in Argentina’s constitution, the university recently made it mandatory for all students, regardless of discipline, to engage in some form of social practicum.

The first two articles establish some of the journal’s central themes – the role of universities as champions of student engagement, the importance of understanding why engagement is necessary, and who it is for. The UV authors argue that the term ‘engagement’, as commonly conceived, does not fully communicate what true engagement entails and what higher education institutions should do. They believe not enough emphasis is placed on community impact or on how communities can give institutions feedback to improve engagement initiatives. UV uses the term *vinculación* (bonding) and UBA uses *extensión*. Though different in meaning, both articles argue that *vinculación* and *extension* are not only difficult to understand but can also be

challenging to weave into a university's strategic mission. A key contrast between the two articles lies in the way the institutions have sought to integrate service, or engagement, across all their functions. UV does not perceive social service as a third mission, but rather as part of the institution's *raison d'être*, and has long been committed to a vision of high-level, large-scale engagement. UBA does view service as a third but central mission. The institution has, by contrast, devised an overarching theoretical framework on which to build its engagement strategy. While different, this strategy is no less all-encompassing or radical. The contrast between these two university's approaches show readers two different paths toward holistic university engagement.

Next, the reader will see how two similar models, both driven and championed by a university engagement centre, play out on the ground with 'Puentes UC: A bridge between university and society' from the Catholic University of Chile, and "'Useful, usable and used": Sustaining an Australian model of cross-faculty service learning by concentrating on shared value creation' at University of Technology, Sydney (UTS). At the Catholic University of Chile, students can tap into the many connections between the center Puentes UC and governmental agencies to carry out client-based projects. By describing the centre's work the authors address a vital question posed by the first and second articles: why should institutions engage? One answer is revealed by what Puentes UC does on a daily basis – to provide services and solutions to problems the state cannot address on its own – reaffirming the critical role of higher education institutions. Subsequent articles by Pakistan's Aga Khan University and Malaysia's International Medical University also reinforce this vital role of universities. Acknowledging the ongoing gap in the literature around how community members value and perceive engagement, the article by UTS Shopfront does try to fill this by offering data and an overview of how their local community organisations work with them to create 'shared-value', a two-way track that is mutually reinforcing.

The final two articles are about programs at Aga Khan University in Pakistan and International Medical University in Malaysia, where leaders provide healthcare to squatter settlements suffering from communicable diseases and rural indigenous communities, respectively. The article from Aga Khan University, 'Inculcating health awareness in Karachi, Pakistan: How innovative, socially acceptable methods can help combat communicable diseases of poverty', describes a large-scale health engagement project that provides a range of services in novel ways to reach as many people as quickly as possible. They understand the issue and its complexities and have devised innovative ways to address it. Aga Khan University is one of the most respected institutions in the country with resources to scale a project at the level described in the article. The university's prominence and

commitment allows it to prioritize social engagement programs like the Urban Health and AGAHI program, and provides it with the capacity to reach people in the outskirts of Karachi, Pakistan.

The authors of the Aga Khan article explain in detail what the program does and how it carries out its operation. Additionally, the article mentions the importance of ‘social accountability’, which openly allows and asks the community to demand that the state or in this case, the university, provide quality services. The authors attribute some of the positive outcomes in physical and mental health to the relationship built on this accountability. The community, they argue, is able to understand its rights and its ability to positively impact the situation thereby building trust between community and institution.

Despite the university’s unconditional support, and the high level of accountability the authors say the program achieved, little is said about the challenges and setbacks they encountered along the way. While a discussion of these issues could offer readers valuable insight into the program, there is still much to learn from the program particularly around its community work through addressing communicable diseases. The authors also allude to the inextricable relationship between the spread of communicable diseases and poverty. One exists because of the other. Many of the authors in this edition make a similar cyclical connection between problems and the socioeconomic structures that feed into them. They contend that issues do not exist in isolation and are not caused by any single factor, rather they argue that issues should be viewed in context and engagement must similarly take a holistic approach to tackling these issues.

There is much literature that speaks of the impact engagement activities and initiatives have on students. At the Talloires Network, we see heads of institutions, professors, and others encourage and mandate that students go out to communities; put their knowledge to use; and, more importantly, be at the service of the most needy. There are rosy tales of life-changing experiences, and of the knowledge gained from such engagement activities. However, there is another side to that story that is told less often. The last article by IMU, ‘Serving an Indigenous community: Exploring the cultural competence of medical students in a rural setting’, gives a candid look into the jarring effect of being immersed in an unfamiliar community. Being confronted with this new experience challenges students’ perceptions of communities ‘in need’ and the role of higher education institutions in training and providing the space for students to begin developing cultural competencies. Developing cultural competency is not just a task for students, but also for administrators and professors who do engaged work daily.

Each article in this edition describes a very different relationship with engaged work, but all are united by one common question: can higher education engage with communities in a mutually beneficial way while providing opportunities for rigorous learning and reflection? The articles in this edition offer a

resounding, 'yes', but how to achieve this is a complex and ever-changing answer. The authors and programs described in this edition are facing this challenge head-on in myriad ways. Some readers may view these as toolkits for their own engaged work, while others may take them as inspiration from across the globe. Whatever the case, each article offers hope that higher education institutions can remain grounded, relevant, and eager to learn from the communities around them.