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In his keynote address for AAC&U's conference, *Pedagogies of Engagement*, Dr. Keeling argues for a comprehensive, campus-wide approach to providing transformative liberal education for all students. Focusing on changes in our understanding of the dynamics and determinants of learning, he encourages all campus educators to approach students as whole people whose learning occurs in multiple contexts, formats, and methods. His message is both pedagogical and political; he emphasizes the change in our relationship with students that is necessarily at the heart of reform in higher education.

Now That You Know: The Opportunities and Obligations of Learning

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Good evening.

We are about to perform an act of relatively unengaged pedagogy. After a decade of derision about the disadvantages and traumas of traditional methods of teaching, we are, at our conferences, on the verge – but not on the cutting edge.

On the verge in fact of the same old same old, not the cutting edge of pedagogical progress.

I just wanted to be certain that you knew I know. I do.

That phrase – I do – makes me squirm just slightly. I leave here tomorrow before decent people are out of bed to fly to Charlottesville, Virginia, where my older daughter, Jennifer, is being married on Saturday. It's not that I have any reservations about the "I do" she is about to say; it's all good. But I get nervous when I'm in the penumbra of promises that include such magisterial concepts as "til death do us part." And there's the whole "obey" thing.

She walks the nave of St. Paul's in Charlottesville from narthex to altar and travels from engaged to married; it makes one wonder – do engaged pedagogies eventually become married ones? Will they ever get, that is, to the altar?

I.

The word "educate," (and all of its derivatives, servants, and relatives), arises from the Latin root *educō*, which means *to lead from* (e, from, and *-duco*, to lead) – not to *put into* or *stuff full of* or *give pop quizzes to*.

Education is a process that brings forth something new from – and in, and of – the learner. *Educo*.

If we still meant that when we said “education” we wouldn’t be so embarrassed about the modern construction and use of the term, and we wouldn’t be eternally coming up with some other phrase to replace it. Maybe we would even get over our historical arrogance about Ed.D.’s and Ph.D.’s. There is education and there is philosophy, like the warp and the woof, or the sacred and the profane, the agony and the ecstasy, the mill and the floss. Or, in each case, vice versa.

The companion word “teaching,” which has gathered the sad inheritance of our thinking of *education* as an assault on the unprepared mind, became a liability when we became learning-centered.

But in real education, there is teaching and learning, a symbiotic transformation that allows the roles of teacher and learner to be continuously reassigned.

And in real education, the learner participates – mysteriously but inevitably – as a whole person. Students not only collaborate in the process of learning: they in fact *embody* it. They bring something new (a classroom experience, an experiment in a wet lab, a short conversation with a professor, a comment overheard on the bus, the section of the assignment they read last night) into themselves – interpret and reform it, reflect or refract its content, and make some meaning of it, to be incorporated or discarded.

John Dewey described education as the reconstruction and reorganization of experience in order to make meaning. Dewey conceived this as a predominantly cerebral process, and I am certainly not one to undersell the brain. But learning engages *all* of a student, when it works, and there is no “engaged pedagogy” that does not attempt exactly that thing.

All the “material” of courses, leadership training, or community service (and everything else that makes up students’ “college experience,” whether or not it is designed or delivered by the college, as a decreasing proportion of it actually is) is filtered through the body, mind, emotions, and spirit of each student. That material becomes in every case a volatile, tentative, temporarily unstable element of a person who is made slightly new by each such encounter.

It is in many ways an uncertain, unequal – even unbalanced – osmosis that occurs; how the creation, absorption, adaptation, or application of knowledge changes each student varies, and the determinants of the outcome are not solely factors resident in the content itself. Rather, many are characteristics of the learner, all of them colored by the forces of culture, family, and society. Some of them are woven deeply into the genetic fabric of each unique human person.

This is not a statement about, nor an endorsement of, intellectual relativism; rather, it is an observation about learning itself, and how – and where – it happens.

Too long we have thought that it happened only in the mind [hence the rules of college: first, don’t bring your body to the classroom, and second, don’t bring your mind to the residence hall]. But every literature professor worth her salt has long known that students cannot truly know – own, be engaged with – a poem unless they *say it aloud*.

Read the poem on the page, and it’s puzzling, inspiring, interesting, perhaps lyrical; say the poem with your own breath, out loud, and it is yours.

Bring the poem into yourself; hold it there, pull it back out, noisy and stuttering or smooth, into the world. The material – the poem – is reborn; so, in fact, is the student.

It is this rebirth – this constant process of personal, intellectual, and human renewal – that is the most profound argument for liberal education. We call it liberal education because it frees the mind, the spirit, and the person; it frees us from small-mindedness, narrowness of perspective, the repetition of historical (and, sometimes, our own) mistakes, and intellectual insularity. It is this liberal education that is both engaged and transformative. And it is fostering those outcomes that is the work of engaged pedagogy.

But liberal education is never theoretical; on the contrary, it is deeply personal, indeed as much physical and psychological as cerebral, and it happens in flesh and blood in the lives of real people.

II.

“Maybe it would help, Keeling, if you say the poem.”

I was a senior undergraduate in the Honors program in English at the University of Virginia. The chair of the Department, E.D. Hirsch, Jr. (later the source of a series of books on cultural literacy), was my thesis advisor. This relationship was undoubtedly lopsided, and far more beneficial to me than to Mr. Hirsch, whose suffered witless undergraduates with astonishing aplomb.

My thesis was stalled. My subject was the intellectual development of the English romantic poet William Blake, he of “The Tyger” and “The Marriage of Heaven and Hell,” the creator of illuminated manuscripts, a celebrant of the French revolution. He was a complicated figure at best, and the poetry, deceptively simple on the page, held treasures of meaning and invited great riffs of interpretation.

I was originally attracted not so much by what I understood as what I sensed, and heard, and felt, in the rhythms of his poems.

*Tyger Tyger, Burning bright
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?*

Later, by the way, I saw a Calvin and Hobbes cartoon strip about “The Tyger,” in which Calvin (the boy) expresses to Hobbes (the tiger) his belief that the poem is about a tiger that caught his tail on fire in the woods; it is, Calvin decides, a cautionary tale about flammability in felines. It would have helped me tremendously to have seen that cartoon while I was mid-thesis. But I didn’t.

Mr. Hirsch said, “The trouble with you, Keeling, is that you’re not engaged with the poems.”

I had been waiting for some 20 years to learn what the trouble with me was, and, although it turned out eventually that the answer was far more complicated than Don Hirsch imagined at the time, I was vaguely grateful for that first guess.

But I was deeply offended. I felt exceedingly engaged. I had, after all, read all of Blake’s work, including some of the frankly tedious later poems. He was influenced in various ways by Goethe, Henry Fuseli, and Emanuel Swedenborg, so I had driven myself to learn German and a little Swedish; in an almost-failed effort to wrap my floppy mind around some key transformations in Blake’s rather volatile theology, I had read Swedish mystics, Teutonic revisionists, and, God help me, Wordsworth.

Hours and hours in the stacks of the Alderman Library, a good 30 years before Google.

I objected. I said I was very engaged, thank you.

Mr. Hirsch demurred. “If you were engaged,” he said, a little tartly, “you wouldn’t be stalled.”

“How do I get engaged, then?” I asked.

“Stop being stalled,” he said.

And how do I unstage myself?” I inquired.

“Get engaged,” he said.

Our conversation at cross purposes continued only briefly before he mentioned Wordsworth, who, like Blake, had been inspired by the events of what came to be known as Bastille Day. Blake, of course, alluded to the history-making days of 1789 quite cleverly in his poetry; Wordsworth, seldom clever, banged his reader across the head with thousands of words on the subject, including a few hundred in the poem, “The French Revolution.”

Nine of which Professor Hirsch then quoted to me, throwing his hands in the air and bellowing. “Keeling, feel it! Remember what Wordsworth wrote! ‘Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive’.”

At which point he tipped too far in his chair and fell straight backwards onto the floor, where he landed smartly with his legs and feet pumping in the air, still talking.

“Maybe it would help if you say the poem,” he concluded.

And I did. In the woods of The Dell, an area used late in the evening for what might be called informal peer-based student development activities, I said, and yelled, and called out the poem. It didn’t take long; it took, as Adrienne Rich writes, all my breath.

But in the Dell I came to know my own Tyger, and, by the time I went home, I could answer for myself at least the pressing question of the fifth stanza:

*When the stars threw down their spears
And water’d Heaven with their tears:
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?*

Learning is ever thus – integrated, human, real. And when it is, it is engaged.

III.

In the late-nineties film, “The Matrix,” a character deftly portrayed by the actor Keanu Reeves awakens to a technological future that most of us hope never actually materializes. The surreal blending of virtual reality with the usual cinematic struggle between good and evil gives the movie a compelling, if confusing, double stream of consciousness; in some ways, the “real world” is the good guy, and the virtual world the bad one.

Not the usual source of pedagogical innovation, perhaps—but hidden in “The Matrix” are crucial observations about educational effectiveness and the pathway to better outcomes in learning.

In the film, learning has become, at one level, archly mechanical and depressingly neurobiological; Reeves “learns” languages, specific new skills (such as piloting sophisticated helicopters), and systems of martial arts and self-defense by the direct transfer (or, rather, implantation) of new material into his brain through a kind of plug inserted conveniently in the back of his head. Ouch.

But no more mind-banging lectures, terrifying lab sessions, or nerve-plucking examinations!

There is, of course, a catch (as always, in both real and virtual worlds): Reeves finds out, and rather quickly and painfully, that information alone, no matter how effectively transmitted, won’t cut the proverbial mustard when it comes to destroying villains and saving the world as we know it. He has to incorporate, play with, and test drive his newly acquired knowledge and skills, experiment with the new content lighting up his neurons, and explore the ways in which he can integrate who he is—including all of

his history, intellect, motivation, and emotions—with what he has learned in order to make sense of it and have it work in his hands. The first helicopter flight wasn't especially pretty.

Blinding glimpse of the obvious though it seems, he discovers that learners must be active participants in adapting themselves and the material they are learning to fit each other. The same is true of learning in any other context: it is not so bland and simple as inserting a new memory module, no matter how accurately information is driven into the cortex. Learning requires engagement, involvement, integration—and, above all, adaptation.

IV.

Let's get to the center of this.

At the core of the concept of engaged pedagogies is a fundamentally different relationship with the student – one that rests its theory and praxis on a non-dichotomous ordering of the roles of teacher and learner, and one that requires a political, as well as curricular, analysis.

Such a view of students holds that they are assets, not liabilities; that they are colleagues, if you will, more than targets; that they are not simply nests of pathology, but originators of ideas and solutions. That they have power, and that their power can produce positive effects and support the achievement of important learning outcomes.

Some might argue, of course, that students have had – and used – power all along; that students' choices to come to class or not, pay attention or read the campus newspaper, takes notes or send instant messages to their friends, and participate in discussions or play computer games are expressions of that power. But equating disengagement of that sort with the kind of expression of power I mean when I encourage us to restore respect for students' ideas and leverage their intellectual energy and curiosity in the search for solutions to important problems is absurd.

In medicine, progressive ideas about the physician-patient relationship now virtually exclude from consideration a concept that has been at times exceedingly popular: *non-compliance*. Patients who did not take their medication as directed, return for their scheduled appointment, stop smoking, start exercising, change their diet, stop using tanning booths, or get more sleep were all non-compliant. The very concept of non-compliance is, of course, one of differential power: I tell you what to do, and you fail to do what I demanded. Yelling at patients about their problems with compliance is, to borrow Mark Twain's line, like trying to teach a pig to sing; it won't work, and it frustrates the pig.

What would be better is a program of treatment that emerges from physician and patient together, in consideration of all the welter of psychological, socioeconomic, and medical factors that affect a patient's decisions – and in the context of that patient's history, family, and culture. Compliance rates, if you want to call them that, for such treatment strategies are far better than for traditional approaches that privilege physicians and understand patients as empty vessels.

Students may seem non-compliant, too, talking on their cell phones in the back of large lecture halls while a nearly-invisible professor struts his or her hour upon the stage below. A sophomore from Green Bay once told me, when I asked him why he was reading *The Onion* rather than listening to my lecture that he was simply "multi-tasking." But what is really going on in any of these admittedly trying circumstances is disengagement – the final common pathway of disenchantment, disinvestment, and distancing that represent in some ways the first approximation of intentional learning – that which we seek as we follow the path of *Greater Expectations*.

Students, in other words, have become their own academic advisers, without portfolio. They decide what matters, what will be meaningful, and what will prepare them for a future they desire (and, perhaps, deserve) – and then seek that thing, whether it is a course, a section of a course, a major, or an entire

curriculum. Everything else – like meeting general education requirements – becomes a sideshow to the main event. At the heart of this tendency of students to take academic advising into their own hands is not just our failure to provide it in ways, times, and formats that work for them, but also a pragmatic adaptation to the, pardon me, so-called real world.

More of today's students in most kinds of institutions are increasingly working college into the rest of their very busy lives. For many of them, student status has shifted from a statement about personal identity to a simple specification of how a person spends a segment of his or her waking hours. They do not necessarily accept the implications of studenthood – from power differentials with professors to restricting their learning environment to the one that the institution provides.

To put it brusquely: students are not just students anymore. "Student" is not necessarily their primary identity, the student community is not necessarily their primary community, "student status" does not necessarily define their relationship with faculty, administrators, or the college itself, and student development, as historically defined, may not be relevant.

But our educational structures and systems have not learned the implications of that change – just as they have been slow to adapt to the technicolor presentation and advanced sound system of a multimedia, digital learning environment that gives students near total power over their own learning agenda. The cultural transformation called the "democratization of information" is in fact a political sea change: a power shift that calls upon universities to redefine their assets and restructure their relationships with students.

Students have, then, performed yet another leapfrogging act: not so much shifting paradigms (ugh; what a terrible and useless phrase) as changing gears. Innovating as their own amateur academic designers, they have (once again) changed the rules (another reminder of Calvin and Hobbes: *Calvinball*, a game in which the rules were, to put it kindly, fluid). Their unfettered access to information, participation in multiple learning environments, complex lives, and re-engineering of what it means to be a student have, collectively, jumped them over the assumptions, processes, and structures of our traditional curricula and classrooms. Just as their access to the almost-unlimited resources of the Internet requires that we shift our educational focus toward assessment and qualification of sources of information, so their informal claim to power in the educational process should inspire shifts in our priorities as well.

This phenomenon does not stop at graduation. Emerging research on the life and work priorities of what Professor Richard Florida of Carnegie Mellon University calls the "creative class" – perhaps a category that largely overlaps those who are, or were, engaged learners in college – reveals similar changes in the workplace. In his interviews and focus groups, recent graduates spoke of wanting to "bring themselves to work" – their real identities and real selves – rather than creating a separate, instrumental self to function in the workplace. The whole person in college wants to be a whole person at work. And the flexibility they seek is not just in hours or dress: it goes far deeper, to a demand that employers nurture and support their creativity and permit them to explore side interests and outside-the-workplace activities. And workplace research increasingly shows that employees wish to take more personal responsibility for defining their own careers – the outcome, perhaps, of intentional learning in college.

Colleges and universities then are no longer in control of learning – and "college" has become simply the aggregation of things that people called students experience during the time they are matriculated at an institution of higher education. Except in some small private liberal arts colleges the concept of college life has thoroughly changed – and even in those institutions learning is not and will not be ever again accomplished the way it was a decade ago.

All of that is not exactly what AAC&U's national panel had in mind when they prepared *Greater Expectations* and spoke of the development of students as "intentional learners" who would thoughtfully – and with appropriate counsel – define their own learning goals.

But the impulse to support intentional learners draws its sustenance from the concept of student power filtered through the college experience. Are current systems and structures in higher education

responding to the needs of today's students in ways that will support their intentionality in learning? Are we training and preparing and supporting advisors and educational designers who can be competent and effective resources for them in that process?

In her remarks at a reception on Capitol Hill on the evening before the second Sumner Symposium of the Program for Health and Higher Education of the Association of American Colleges and Universities in 2002, Carol Geary Schneider, President of the Association, emphasized students' emerging roles as co-creators of knowledge in alliance with changing assumptions about liberal education:

We think that liberal education is going to have to place new emphasis on preparing students for the unexpected, for the uncharted, for the unscripted...More and more, students will be themselves engaged from the outset of college in inventing knowledge and becoming co-collaborators with their faculty in advancing those unscripted, uncharted questions that are the work of our time. This kind of co-creation is going to be accomplished in a wide range of situations from traditional research to community-based research to civic activities to civic leadership.

But simply to say those things would be only to recite the emerging liturgy of educational reform. To translate liturgy into pedagogical practice will require steps not only in the curriculum, but also in the very structures and systems through which learning is (or is not) accomplished in the modern academy – and through which power, engagement, and potential are defined in the relationship between educators and students.

Richard Guarasci, now President of Wagner College on Staten Island, has explored those concepts as they affect what he calls practical liberal education. In his book, *Democratic Education in an Age of Difference: Redefining Citizenship in Higher Education*, he wrote, in 1997:

What is taught, who is read, what questions are asked, what issues are explored—all call for continual scrutiny. But reforming the curriculum to make it more inclusive while leaving the pedagogy—and the very structure of the university—unexamined will not further democratic aims.

Barbara Carson, the Theodore Bruce and Barbara Lawrence Alford Professor of English at Rollins College addresses, as did Carol Schneider, a different sort of power, one that is tightly linked to the visibility and strength of students in classrooms. She speaks of “the power of serendipity, or the blessing of the un-programmed, the unscripted, the unexpected...Control is a word that can make us flounder.”

...creativity is possible in a moment of dysequilibrium for all of us, where we've lost control. Isn't that supposed to be the moment of growth, when we're all off balance? ...That may be the very instigator of our figuring out other ways of relating to each other besides control...(we can't continue to have) the metaphor of faculty needing to be in control.

Professors and other educators who wish to practice an engaged pedagogy must inevitably live and work in some tension between an essential disciplinary rigor and their openness in relation to students. Barbara Carson's research at Rollins has convincingly demonstrated – as my own history with Don Hirsch also suggests – that what students remember most about their college experience is the influence of demanding professors who had high expectations of them; toughness in a professor brought respect and created strong memories. It also fosters engagement. And it allows for moments of, well, surprise. What else was it but dysequilibrium that deposited Professor Hirsch on the floor of Cabell Hall and sent me into the woods to find tigers?

There is, then, no sense that a renewed relationship with students that recognizes their capacities, draws upon their assets, and shares power required a weaker investment in the discipline.

At the same time, many authors and educators have acknowledged the institutional barriers that oppose innovative educational methods and designs. Gail Dinter-Gottlieb, President and Vice-Chancellor of Acadia University in Nova Scotia, has described the challenge of encouraging faculty to adopt new pedagogies and classroom structures that depend upon more open and equal relationships with students:

One of the issues is a demon that I struggle with...the faculty need for control...in the classroom, and the reluctance of the faculty to realize that there are other ways of teaching and learning...that are not contingent on "I'm in control and you're not."

New pedagogical models and renewed relationships with students will usually require fundamental – and more democratic – systems and assumptions in classrooms and across universities. Greater support for students' power will, then, lead to – and come from – substantial alterations not only in the conduct of teaching but also in academic and curricular structures themselves. A new pedagogy that liberates students' power will depend on freeing universities themselves from some of their most basic educational models.

V.

During the past two years, the two major professional organizations in student affairs, NASPA (the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators) and ACPA (the American College Personnel Association) have collaborated to develop a statement about learning that accounts for the whole student. It is not, however, standard "student affairs boilerplate." Instead, the document – called *Learning Reconsidered* – responds to AAC&U's *Greater Expectations* in a thoughtful manner, suggesting ways in which transformative liberal education can be made possible for all students in institutions of all types.

AAC&U responded to a radical, uniquely American idea about education – the notion of equal access – with a similarly radical construct about liberal education. NASPA and ACPA added a third radical dimension in suggesting that all the resources of a campus can – should – must – be assessed and deployed in the service of providing transformative liberal education for each student. *Learning Reconsidered* follows the tracks of today's students; it trails them into the many predictable and surprising places from which they garner knowledge, experience, and perspectives. Like Keanu Reeves in *The Matrix* and Don Hirsch, it knows that learning is more than a cognitive experience.

Learning Reconsidered defines *learning* as a comprehensive, holistic, transformative activity that integrates *academic learning* and *student development*, processes that have often been considered separate, and even independent of each other. It challenges us to understand *learning* not exclusively or primarily as academic instruction, the acquisition of disciplinary content, or classroom learning – though a rich definition of learning certainly incorporates and includes all of those things. It encourages us *not to say learning and development* because we do not want to suggest that learning and student development are fundamentally different things, or that one does, or could, occur without the other. Nor should we specify separate, distinct, or categorical learning (in the pure academic sense) and developmental objectives and outcomes.

Learning Reconsidered focuses more on the theory of learning, an expansion of our ideas of what the curriculum includes, the education of the student as a whole person, and the accountability that institutions of higher education have to define and achieve specific learning outcomes than on the politics of classrooms and the power of students. But its recommendations – and the enlightened vision of college learning that informs it – cannot be accomplished without the kinds of systematic and structural changes that Guarasci, Carson, and many others would endorse. America democratized education; the Internet and our mass media democratized information; AAC&U called for the democratization of liberal education; and *Learning Reconsidered* interestingly democratizes learning itself – as much in reflection of what has actually happened as in anticipation of any process of change. All of those are fundamentally political acts; taken together, they link student power with engaged pedagogies in the heart of the academy to come.

VI.

Engaged pedagogies are learning methods that support what Caine and Caine have called *brain based learning*, which is not as silly as the name may sound. Our first reaction – “well, duh, learning is, after all brain-based” – exposes our biases and displays the limitations of our understanding of the ways in which learning happen in whole people.

Using neurobiological methods and brain imaging techniques, we can now demonstrate the activation of neural processes that contribute to the deep transformation of cognition and patterning, or meaning making. For such transformative learning to occur, students must participate in an orchestrated immersion in a complex experience that in some way illustrates phenomena that are connected to the subject and engage in active processing or reflection on the experience.

Traditional approaches to learning – such as the lecture I’m now giving – do not specifically address this integration of external information and internal reflection; new concepts of transformative learning attend closely to the receptivity of the student and the physical conditions in which the student learns. Were we to have those factors in mind, would we schedule keynote addresses *after dinner* in the evening?

The most important factor in engaged pedagogies is that the learning that occurs -- transformative liberal education – always and everywhere happens in the active context of students’ lives. Barbara Carson has said it this way:

(Listening to the students) I kept thinking, “You know, if somehow the classroom doesn’t illuminate life, in a very real and lived way, maybe we need to rethink (what we’re doing).” But I think it does...not necessarily in that particular moment, but in a larger sense...I think we have to find a way to justify to our students what we’re doing in the classroom when people are dying around the world.

A standard approach to engagement in teaching and learning is what we usually call “service learning” – Ernest Boyer’s “scholarship of engagement.” In any community service setting, bidirectional, transactional learning occurs – the clients learn and benefit from their relationship with students, and vice versa. But real *service learning* – which implies that transformation will occur – happens when a seminar or opportunity for reflection (through journaling, conversation with other students or with the people they serve, or additional reading) is part of the total service experience, while *community service* alone leaves the issue of transformation to chance. In other words, community service becomes service learning when it illuminates life in ways that integrate external information with internal reflection. Community service becomes service learning when it stimulates abstract or symbolic thought, when it inspires comparisons, when it creates opportunities or obligations.

Research about the effects of service learning performed by RAND Education and by Alexander Astin’s group at UCLA has shown that service learning experiences do not strengthen academic achievement *unless* they include certain “best practices,” such as discussions of the service experience and close linkages to the students’ desired educational outcomes (as reflected in choice of major). That is, the conditions of engagement must be met for the experience of involvement in service to be transformative. Service learning without engagement – fraternity members bouncing basketballs to collect money for charities, for example – is just an activity.

When it is – and, perhaps, when any other experience of learning is transformative – the results demonstrate the translation of thought into action. Students begin to ask, and answer, the question: “Now that you know, what must you do?” Classically, service learning, when transformative, correlates with an increased sense of civic responsibility.

Our project on science education reform (SENER – Science Education for New Civic Engagements and Responsibilities) applies the same general principles to a more general range of scientific topics, linking pedagogical reform (engaged learning) with civic purposes and outcomes. Using what the principal investigators, David Burns (who is Senior Policy Director at AAC&U) and Karen Oates (now Vice

President for Academic Affairs at Harrisburg University of Science and Technology) call capacious social and civic questions (from preserving biodiversity to applying our knowledge of the human genome, from nanotechnology to world hunger) to illuminate and teach basic science, SENCER courses produce both improved learning outcomes and experiential preparation for citizenship.

Part of the wisdom of the SENCER design is the absence of frank instrumentality – that is, the courses are not ordered just to produce volunteerism or community service. Instead, it is engagement with the important social questions that we need science to help answer that generates a greater interest in, and greater learning gains regarding, the science itself.

Engaged pedagogies, then, are not just different methods; they aren't a new set of mechanics to apply to the physics of a classroom. Engaged pedagogies are not just new means of teaching, or managing classroom activities and discussions. They are integrative forms of learning that demand reflective responses from students in their wholeness – ways of learning that create a space for that crucial question, “Now that you know, what must you do.” While some service learning activities stimulate students to ponder “There, but for the grace of God, go I” or “That could have been me,” what we seek in truly engaged learning is another layer – an action step, if you will – that says “There are circumstances, problems, or needs here in which I can intervene.” The idea of engaged pedagogies depends on putting students in those roles – on unleashing their power – and on keeping their learning experiences pertinent to their lives. *Now that I know how much HIV/AIDS will reduce the average lifespan in China and India by 2025, what must I do?*

Innovative learning experiences by themselves liberate students' power and support their agency.

When the goals of education are to produce “*intentional learners* who can adapt to new environments, integrate knowledge from difference sources and continue learning throughout their lives,” as *Greater Expectations* suggests, we must give emphasize changing the ways in which students conceive their roles, abilities and contributions in the larger society. When we, as educators, expect students to become “*empowered* through the mastery of intellectual and practical skills; *informed* by knowledge about the natural and social worlds and about forms of inquiry basic to these studies; and *responsible* for their personal actions and civic values” we seek transformation through reframing belief and value systems. Such an approach to teaching and learning must include the full scope of a student's life. It cannot be accomplished in the classroom alone – but not out of the classroom alone, either.

VII.

What about the relationship of engaged learning – the kind that not just suggests, but in some way demands, opportunities and obligations, the kind that integrates identity development with intellectual investment, the kind that embraces the full context of students' lives – to some of the most serious of the health problems affecting college and university students?

Especially: can engaged pedagogies be used to reduce the prevalence, severity, or suffering caused by those problems? This is the core question being explored by President Donald Harward and his colleagues in AAC&U's “Bringing Theory to Practice” project – supported through the generosity and commitment of the Charles Engelhard Foundation.

We might project any or all of several speculative relationships between the frequency or intensity of those problems among students and the degree, or level, of engagement of our pedagogies and their learning or scholarship.

The most mechanical and least elegant of these is a simple diversionary hypothesis: the more engaged students are with the exploration, acquisition, or application of knowledge, the less time, energy, and resources they will have for drinking. “Idle hands do the devil's work,” my grandmother said, far too often. In favor of this view, though, are certain basic characteristics of the usual patterns of excessive college

drinking, including, notably, its tendency to improve during exam periods and visits home and to be very sensitive to the structural demands of employment. Hence the common observation that heavy episodic drinking of the college type tends to “get better” with graduation.

Further in support of this idea are the correlations between drinking status and academic performance in college. Heavy episodic, or binge, drinkers are more likely than non-binge drinkers to perform poorly on a test, miss a class, or get behind in schoolwork due to alcohol use. The overall effect of heavy alcohol consumption on academic performance as measured by grade point average (GPA) is negative, and that outcome is explained primarily by a reduction in the hours spent studying. Students who live in substance free residence halls have, in some studies, higher GPAs than do their counterparts in ordinary campus housing. Even having a drinking roommate reduces academic performance.

At the same time, some of those associations may in fact represent actual biological cause and effect – that is, that chronic heavy drinking impairs the capacity to learn and the ability to form and access new memories sufficiently that students whose consumption patterns are aggressive will be unable to sustain academic performance equal to that of otherwise similar students who do not drink so heavily. Our increasing knowledge of the effects of alcohol on the continuing development of the adolescent/young adult brain reveals the greater sensitivity of unfinished neural tissue to the effects of alcohol and provides a reasonable biological basis for a causal relationship between excessive drinking and academic underachievement.

Those observations at the very least underscore the importance of our efforts to reduce heavy episodic drinking – and, to the extent that more engaged learning does in fact make it less likely for students to put more time into drinking and less into studying, they give more merit to our struggle to make transformative liberal education accessible for all students. At the same time, caution is warranted; we should not overinterpret current research. GPA, after all, is not a sufficient measure of engaged learning, and college drinking is not simply a personal choice.

The most important conclusion from three decades of scholarship on student drinking is that it is first and foremost a social phenomenon, deeply embedded in both a specific cultural context (college) and closely linked to greater social and media environments. Students drink primarily socially, not in isolation; college drinking is not and cannot be explained through the usual adult concepts of addiction. It is not and cannot be adequately understood through the usual clinical lens of alcohol use disorders. The determinants of students’ drinking choices are not entirely their own; patterns of drinking differ in various college social networks, and students who wish to change drinking behavior (to up-regulate or down-regulate their own drinking) usually have to change friends. Years of research have shown that most undergraduate students expect drinking to accomplish a number of social goals for them, from “breaking the ice” to facilitating sexual opportunities. Diverting students from such patterns of heavy episodic drinking through engaged learning – or anything else – requires accounting for, and challenging, these social patterns and realities.

The current AAC&U project is not, of course, the first to use the phrase “bringing theory to practice.” In 1997, the United States Department of Education published *Designing Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention Programs in Higher Education* with the same subtitle, offering six papers that focused on new approaches to accountability in campus alcohol policy and programs. This volume contains, in particular, a seminal essay by David Burns and Margaret Klawunn, written when Burns was Assistant Vice President for Student Life Policy at Rutgers, called *The Web of Caring* – a powerful challenge to traditional individualistic approaches to alcohol prevention that not only accepted but sought to leverage, as an asset, its social construction and dependence upon the characteristics and influence of social networks. The approach that Burns suggested is as political and as essential as our recognition of the role of student power in engaged learning: empowering students to talk, listen, and care for one another.

The diversionary hypothesis fails when applied to depression and suicide. While it is also true that depression can undermine students’ ability to focus and engage, and that treating depression can restore intellectual flexibility, classroom performance, and measured academic achievement, there is no real social, psychometric, or educational evidence that students “choose” depression as a social behavior, as

is the case with heavy episodic drinking, or that greater engagement with learning will keep them from being depressed.

While the rates of suicide among college students are lower than is true among their same age peers not in college, there are multiple reasons for those differences; student status alone is not the determining factor (the characteristics of people who do and do not go to college are not exactly the same). The democratization of higher education – with more than 70 percent of this year's high school graduates going to college – is associated with increasing rates of college suicide as, perhaps, those differences become less sharp.

Any experienced professor or administrator in college can cite examples of brilliant, engaged students who have taken their own lives. There is, unfortunately, no study that tells us whether the rates of depression and suicide among “engaged” students are different than those among less engaged ones.

But while college drinking has a social framework, depression and suicide have a psychological and biological one. Yes, imitative suicidal behavior occurs – New York University's tragic experience this academic year is a painful example – but there is no evidence that social and peer influences determine the presence of debilitating depressive symptoms as they do for drinking. What works to “fix” heavy episodic drinking – direct personal feedback, challenging students' positive expectations about the effects of alcohol, changing campus culture – is not what works to “fix” depression. Psychotherapy and psychopharmacology (antidepressants) are personal, not social, tools.

Can more engaged learning change health-related behavior and health consequences for college students? We must all hope so.

Through the Program for Health and Higher Education, supported by a cooperative agreement with the Centers for Disease Control, AAC&U has stimulated academic experiments on more than 50 campuses on the premise that engaging students with pressing, unresolved health problems (such as HIV/AIDS) can improve both health and learning. These learning experiments clearly engage students in a closer study of health concerns; they foster commitments among students to using their power to address critical health problems.

Similarly, service learning, when practiced well, increases the likelihood that students will accept and demonstrate civic responsibility. Students who binge drink have lower frequencies of volunteer service (perhaps, again, a matter of time allocations). But it is, however, hard to prove that the kinds of experiments in engaged learning that we have tried to date have, in the short-term, changed students' health-related behaviors.

VIII.

Jane Tompkins, then a professor of English at Duke, wrote in her book *A Life in School: What the Teacher Learned* about the accountability of teachers for integrative student learning in college:

What I am asking for is a more holistic approach to learning, a disciplinary training for people who teach in college that takes into account the fact that we are educators of whole human beings, a form of higher education that would take responsibility for the emergence of an integrated person.

Educational reform is difficult. Changing the traditional structures of classrooms is not easy. Creating renewed relationships with students is challenging. Altering the structures and systems of higher education will not be quickly done. Nobody likes giving up power and control, regardless of our belief in the importance of the occasional moment of dysequilibrium.

But we are now all accountable to define and assess our performance against desired student learning outcomes. We are accountable to students to support their growth, development, and competency as intentional learners. We are accountable to revise our pedagogy as necessary to support these goals.

We are accountable to define wider channels toward transformative liberal education for all students. To make intentional learning and transformative education the norm, not the exception. To bring our experiments with engaged pedagogies to scale.

Every resource on every campus should be used to achieve transformative liberal education for all students, and all colleges and universities are accountable for establishing and assessing specific student outcomes that reflect this integrated view of learning.

AAC&U called this *Greater Expectations*. NASPA/ACPA called it *Learning Reconsidered*. If it works, students will just call it college.