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Letters to the Editor

Thanks so much for the excellent November issue of *Academic Matters,* which provided comprehensive coverage on the challenges for fresh PhD graduates from both regional and international perspectives. The volume possibly raises more questions than answers to the evergreen problems regarding suitability of possible PhD employment opportunities under the current scenario of global economic depression. However, the contributors have done an excellent job in bringing all the pertinent issues out of the bag and placing them in an open forum for active discussion and analysis. I would appreciate if you could do an issue on the challenges related to post-doctoral training as this will also benefit a broad spectrum of newly trained students and researchers.

SAIKAT KUMAR BASU, PHD CANDIDATE, UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE

On Jennifer Polk's article, "Life beyond the PhD"

What a great reflective article, and a good motivator! Your comment "...but the reality of dissertating was upon me, and suddenly school wasn't as much fun anymore" really resonated for me, and for so many of my colleagues. Yes, the fun has waned, but this happens in many serious relationships. Thanks for reminding me that there is light at the end of the tunnel, regardless of how long it takes to get there!

S. OAKE

On Elizabeth Bell's Article, "Graduate education in the UK: The postgraduate puzzle"

The author is incorrect that the market for postgraduate education in the UK is a free market, and this misunderstanding leads to faulty analysis of what should be done to increase access amongst Britons to this level of education.

A free market is not one in which a few preselected participants are unregulated only in the sense that they may charge whatever fees they wish. In a truly free market, new entrants would be able to enter the market for postgraduate education. Many of these new institutions would compete on price, causing pressure for existing participants also to economise lest they lose out on business. A free market also means that those participants who cannot compete successfully are not bailed out, but go out of business, another aspect we do not currently see in the British system.

In short, if the goal is for postgraduate education to be more affordable to students, the best policy change would not be to institute an American-style system of government loans to students to help them pay artificially high fees, it would be a policy change that encourages new participants, particularly smaller ones, to enter the market for postgraduate education.

STEVE FOERSTER

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Reclaiming the civic university

George Fallis

Universities have never been more central in public affairs. But what role should they play in our democracy?

Les universités n'ont jamais été aussi essentielles aux affaires publiques. Mais quel rôle devraient-elles jouer au sein de notre démocratie?

Often we are called to 'reclaim the civic university.' This was the topic selected by the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA) for a session at their 2014 conference: *Future U: Creating the universities we want.*

The call to reclaim implies that something has been lost and has been replaced by something different—our universities once were civic but are no longer. The call invites us to ask what have our universities become, what are the forces that are changing them, what is the standing and role of universities in our society today?

By many measures, universities have never been more central in public thinking or higher as a government priority.

In Ontario, there has been an enormous expansion of the university. Undergraduate enrolments grew 58 per cent from 2000-01 to 2012-13—this was a larger absolute increase than during the huge expansion to accommodate the baby boom in the 1960s and 1970s. Graduate enrolments grew even more over this period—82 per cent—the largest expansion in Ontario's history. We tend not to recognize this enormous expansion, perhaps because it was accomplished by expanding existing universities rather than by creating

new ones. But this recent expansion is equivalent to creating seven new universities the size of Carleton University. We fondly remember Premiers Robarts and Davis as believers in public universities and their commitments to university expansion for the baby boom. But Premiers Harris and McGuinty oversaw a much larger expansion. And of course this expansion required a huge increase in public funds. Operating grants grew by over 65 percent. Capital funds grew—we can see shiny new buildings on every campus. Grants for student assistance grew more than tenfold. Total government spending on universities was growing at a faster rate than spending on health care.

Participation rates have never been higher—by the time Ontarians reach the age of 21, 46 per cent have entered university (and another 30 per cent have entered college). I believe, although I must note that this is a minority belief, that participation rates are about as high as they can feasibly go or should go. And because the 18 to 24 year-old group will be shrinking over the coming years, the university system is now large enough. Nonetheless, the government has promised to expand the system further and has announced a framework for major capacity expansion, likely to include three new university campuses. Municipal governments are lobbying hard to have a campus located in their city.

The benefits of a university education are widely recognized. Young people and their families have very high aspirations regarding postsecondary education—most aspire to get a university degree.

Since the 1950s, universities have also been seen as places of research that can contribute in the long run to society, especially to our economy, culture, public policy, and health. Over the past 15 or so years, support for university research has expanded enormously (just as the system was expanding at the undergraduate and graduate levels). Federal research funding grew fourfold; provincial funding tripled.

It is hard to imagine how we might give universities a higher priority and standing. Their central place in a knowledge-based society is acknowledged and secure.

Are our universities today civic universities? Certainly a civic university must be publicly supported, and our universities have received major increases in public support.

But many people would answer that they are not. There is concern, tending toward deep disquiet, and some would argue a crisis. Our universities and the way we think about them have been changing.

Universities are thought of more and more as institutions of the economy. They are expanding, at both the undergraduate and graduate level, to meet the needs of a new knowledge-based economy confronting intense global competition. New research funding is intended to stimulate

There is less and less recognition of the contributions of universities, both in teaching and research, to our cultural or democratic life.

innovation and economic growth. This funding is concentrated in science, technology, engineering, and most especially health; and universities are asked to work actively in partnership with the private sector toward the commercialization of the findings. Students (and their parents) regard a university degree as a means to a better job. Government also thinks this way about universities, and they are not alone. The senior leadership of our universities, as they seek increased funding, build their justification on the basis of these economic arguments.

There is less and less recognition of the contributions of universities, both in teaching and research, to our cultural or democratic life. The humanities, once at the centre of a liberal undergraduate education, are increasingly marginalized. There is little talk that universities should serve the public good.

No, it is argued, these are not civic universities.

But, before we accept this conclusion, let us explore further the concept of a civic university.

One of the meanings of civic refers to that which is of, or relating to, a city or town, especially its administration; of, or relating to, the duties and activities of people in relation to their city or town. This is the meaning at play in the terms 'civic official' or 'civic responsibility' or 'civic pride.' This is the meaning that is connected to one conception of a civic university. There was a civic university movement in England in the late 19th and early 20th centuries that led to the establishment of six universities in industrial cities: Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield, and Bristol. In England, they are often still referred to as 'the civics.' These civic universities stood in contrast to the ancient universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

Unlike these ancient universities, the civics were noncollegiate (students did not live in a residential college) and without religious affiliation. They often grew out of private educational institutes. They were intended to make university accessible to middle and working class students, and

many of their degree programs emphasized the acquisition of skills—especially in engineering-related fields—to prepare students for jobs in their city.

These civic universities had much in common with the land grant universities established in the United States during the late nineteenth century—the University of Wisconsin is an iconic institution of this type. The land grant universities had a similar focus on access and often emphasized engineering and agriculture. Some established the now famous agricultural experiment stations: scientific research centres that worked with farmers, ranchers, suppliers, and food producers to improve food production and expand the business of agriculture. The ethos of the civic and land grant universities was influential in the development of English-language Canadian universities.

The English civics were publicly supported and city-focused. Today, The University of Sheffield refers to itself as 'The Civic University.' The university's website reproduces an early 20th century flyer from when the institution used to solicit penny donations from industrial workers in the city. The flyer is headed: "A University for Sheffield: You should support the University because…" and goes on to list the following reasons:

1. THE UNIVERSITY WILL BE FOR THE PEOPLE.

2. THE UNIVERSITY WILL BRING THE HIGHEST EDUCATION WITHIN THE REACH OF THE CHILD OF THE WORKING MAN.

3. THE UNIVERSITY WILL HELP LOCAL INDUSTRIES.

4. THE UNIVERSITY WILL BE THE CENTRE WHERE THE TREATMENT OF ACCIDENTS AND DISEASES WILL BE STUDIED.

5. SHEFFIELD IS THE ONLY LARGE CITY IN ENGLAND WITHOUT A UNIVERSITY. SHEFFIELD CANNOT AFFORD TO REMAIN IN THIS POSITION.

6. THE UNIVERSITY WILL NOT ONLY BENEFIT THIS DISTRICT, IT WILL ASSIST THIS NATION IN ITS TRADE COMPETITION WITH OTHER NATIONS.

Reading this list of what makes a civic university should give us a jolt. It is eerily close to a description of the trends in our universities today, complete with civic boosters seeking a campus for their city—and yet many look at these current trends and declare that the civic university is being lost. There is an important lesson in this history. One concept of a civic university is that it is city-focused, it is publicly supported and works for the public good. The public good includes accessibility, education that helps graduates get jobs, and applied research that helps the local economy and the national economy faced with global competition.

In this sense, Ontario universities are civic universities. There is no need to reclaim.

But, there are further meanings of the word civic.

Another meaning relates to citizens and citizenship. Civics is the study of good citizenship, of the rights and obligations people have to each other, and of how to be more active and engaged in a community. Civic engagement is essential to democratic governance. Citizens have the right to be informed, to express their opinions and to hear the opinions of others, and to be involved in the deliberations that lead to a decision.

A civic university educates students for citizenship in a democracy. Of course, the university is not the only institution responsible for developing citizens and a university education is not a prerequisite for being a good citizen.

This civic role, this connection of higher education and democracy, has always been part of American thinking about the university.

This was especially evident after World War II and during the move from elite to mass university education. Harvard University has always had a special leadership role in American thought about the nature of undergraduate education. In 1943, the famous Harvard Red Book addressing the undergraduate curriculum was published under the title "General Education in a Free Society." The introduction states "today we are concerned with a general education—a liberal education—not for the relatively few, but for a multitude… [the] purpose is not to educate an élite, but to educate citizens in a democracy." President Truman's Commission on Higher Education titled its 1947 report "Higher Education for American Democracy."

There has always been much debate about what it means to offer an education for citizenship, and even greater debate about what curriculum would best achieve that goal. But in American thinking, there is usually a group of courses in the curriculum (outside the major) chosen and designed to provide a liberal or general education. These courses were intended, among other purposes, to teach moral reasoning and to encourage civic engagement, and the humanities always have a central place in the group.

The United States has had many organizations devoted to encouraging this conception of a civic university education. For example, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) was founded in 1917 to advance, explore, and advocate for a liberal education, seeing the purpose of undergraduate study as preparation not just for work, but also for citizenship. More recently in 2000, Campus Compact was formed as a national coalition of 1,200 American college and university presidents who signed the President's Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education, calling on their institutions to re-examine their public purpose and their commitment to the democratic ideal.

This idea of a civic university—a university that provides education for citizenship and civic engagement—has had an influence on the development of Ontario universities, but the influence is superficial. It is evoked in rhetoric about the university and heard often at graduation ceremonies, but there is

> A civic university is a crucial institution of civil society in a democracy, an alternative centre of authority and a counterweight to government and business.

little of substance in the curriculum designed to achieve this purpose. We do not have special groups of liberal education courses, we have not had any Red Books, and we have no organizations committed to this idea. When we evaluate our undergraduate degree programs we do not investigate whether the degree has educated for citizenship. Our undergraduate degrees are not liberal education programs but rather disciplinary education programs. Over the past few years, Ontario universities have devoted great efforts to specifying degree level expectations and have passed them through their Senates. What should we expect that a student with a Bachelor's degree will have learned? These degree level expectations say nothing about education for citizenship.

Ontario has never had civic universities in this sense. So we cannot reclaim the civic university. The task is to *build* the civic university.

There is a third idea of a civic university: the civic university as a fundamental institution of a democratic society.

What institutions are needed for a democratic society? We know of course that there should be universal suffrage, the right to hold office, the right to form political parties, and regular elections held without corruption or coercion. But these are not sufficient. What else is needed? This is not an abstract question. It is a practical question confronted in all countries, not just those making the transition to democracy. We know that democracy is an ideal, often under threat, and that we should constantly consider whether we have in place the institutions to support and sustain it.

One institution vital to a democracy is a free press. And this is just the most obvious example of a wider cluster of institutions often labeled civil society. In a polity, the institutions of the state—the democratically elected government—are very powerful. There are other power centres that exist—business, most obviously in market economies. In many countries, the military and the dominant religious authority are also centres of power. A democratic polity needs strong civil society organizations as counterweights, as alternate centres of power to the state, business, military, and spiritual authority. These alternative centres offer spaces for democratic deliberation,

for articulating alternative visions of the good, for creating competing ideas of what should be done, and for critiquing the dominant powers.

A civic university is a crucial institution of civil society in a democracy, an alternative centre of authority and a counterweight to government and business. The university is granted autonomy and its professors academic freedom, in part, to ensure this civic role can be fulfilled. Academic research can be a vehicle for social criticism and professors as public intellectuals have a vital role in public debate. As Amy Gutmann argued in her book *Democratic Education*, control of the creation of ideas—whether by a majority or a minority—subverts democracy. Universities "can provide a realm where new and unorthodox ideas are judged on their intellectual merits; where men and women who defend such ideas are not strangers but valuable members of the community. Universities thereby serve democracy as sanctuaries of non-repression."

Are Ontario universities this sort of civic university? The evidence is mixed. Universities are autonomous and professors have academic freedom. Universities provide spaces for democratic deliberation and are sources of social criticism. Many professors are public intellectuals. But universities and their senior leadership are moving closer to government and business. Universities do not see themselves as a counterweight but rather as partners. Their role as an institution of the economy threatens to overwhelm their role as an institution of democracy.

What then can be done to ensure that Ontario universities are civic universities?

Some of the work is external. We must always emphasize the importance of education for citizenship and recognize that the university is an institution of civil society vital to a deliberative democracy. We must also defend institutional autonomy and academic freedom, but must not begrudge the university's role to prepare students for employment or to conduct research that will help the economy.

And some of the work is internal. As professors, we should challenge our leadership to recognize our universities as civic universities, in all its dimensions. We must work to ensure our tenure and promotion criteria recognize a professor's contribution as public intellectual or social critic. We must also guarantee that the undergraduate curriculum leaves room for liberal learning. It is also important that effective education for citizenship is a prominent criterion for assessing the value of our degrees.

And with effort and luck, we might indeed create civic universities. AM

George Fallis is University Professor and Professor of Economics and Social Science at York University. He is author of Multiversities, Ideas, and Democracy *(University of Toronto Press) and* Rethinking Higher Education: Participation, Research, and Differentiation *(Queen's Policy Studies Series, McGill-Queen's University Press).*

THE VALUE OF BEING POROUS:
What universities and cities can do for each other

Kelley Castle

When we bring the community into the university, it enriches everyone's experience.

Lorsque nous intégrons la communauté à l'université, l'expérience de tous s'en trouve enrichie.

Porosity: The capacity to absorb. Having interstices into and through which material can pass. Could this be a university value?

It is not the rigorous stuff that carries academic and curricular value in universities. It is not fun enough for students if it is only promoted as a social good. It is not tangible enough to be community outreach. It is definitely not the eager, aspirational, go-getting sort of thing that makes it onto a university capital campaign priority list. But all of this should be rethought.

Ideas for the World

In a program called Ideas for the World at Victoria College at the University of Toronto, we take a crack at making the walls of the university a bit more porous. The program has 10 sections, all of which are designed around meals. Lunch groups have a cap of 25 students who meet with a different faculty member, public figure, or professional every week for an open discussion led by the guest. Sections have included: Art, architecture and building culture; Culture and conflict in the media; Science in society; Environment and economics; Religion in the public sphere; and The purpose, power and politics of the university.

Weekly topics include such things as what forms our views of scientific doubt and scientific risk, and how the media can influence which wars we think are just. Students consider whether forced quarantine is sometimes socially necessary (for instance with new drug-resistant strains of TB); whether Muslim prayer should be allowed in public schools; whether or how evidence-based medicine represents a shift from traditional paradigms of diagnosing and treating patients. They ask how religion is involved in forming public opinion around international policy (especially in the U.S.); how science, morality, and the law intertwine around the issue of HIV status disclosure; how architecture and power relate; and how the media can sometimes influence people to believe things, even against the evidence. And in the section that considers the university itself (led by our own President, Philosophy Professor Paul Gooch, with various guest speakers) themes have included: why academic freedom is so important; the issue of donors influencing curricular decisions; how the government influences how universities function; and the (not-surprisingly heated) question of who sets priorities for universities and on what basis.

The pool of speakers includes artists, architects, lawyers, doctors, nurses, politicians, epidemiologists, theologians, environmentalists, university presidents and provosts, faculty and administrators, scientists, journalists, ethicists, urban planners, and activists. The students boast a complete mishmash of disciplines, backgrounds, years of study, and non-academic interests.

Invitation to the discussion, the flow of conversation, and the disciplinary boundaries are definitely porous.

On Tuesday evenings the program gets even more porous, welcoming thirty undergraduate mentors and thirty recruits from community centres, shelters, learning centres, churches and food banks. In the fall they take Humanities for Humanity (H4H), which has been running for eight years, and is now a shared venture between Victoria and Trinity Colleges.[1] In the spring a new group rolls in for the Theatre for Thought (T4T) program, started three years ago at Victoria College as part of Ideas for The World. In H4H, faculty and other speakers give lectures on the history of humanities, including works from the so-called canon, but also works from outside and critical of it. In T4T, mini-lectures on theatrical works precede performances of selections from the plays (put on by student volunteers with a volunteer staff director).

At the beginning of each term, community members show up at the ivy-rimmed entrance to the college, and are greeted by students. Many look daunted and hesitant, but they come in. They sit down and tentatively listen to introductory remarks about why education is liberating, the importance of sometimes re-thinking long-held beliefs, and the benefits of collaborative and critical learning. They get a sampling from the program's faculty advisor of the topics they'll cover for the term, ranging, for example, from Plato's *Apology,* to Adam Smith, Machiavelli, Las Casas, Hobbes, Darwin, Marx, De Beauvoir, Fanon, and Dionne Brand. Or theatre ranging from Greek tragedy, Roman comedy, and Medieval and Renaissance theatre through to modern and contemporary plays like Sartre's *No Exit,* Thompson Highway's *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing,* and Moisés Kaufman's *Laramie Project.* They're told it will cover a wide swath of material including difficult, challenging topics. Some are very excited, and most are interested but quiet (so far) and not outwardly convinced they can do it (yet).

The students, on the other hand, have come to help people. They want to be mentors, and are ready to facilitate discussions. Most of them are also a bit unsure, but at least the environment is familiar. They can't resist the social compulsion to sit in a clump on one side of the room, despite previous instructions to mingle. The community members (with a few notably bold exceptions) sit on the other side. It's like a bad high school dance. Everyone wants to be there but only a few have it in them to get the party started. Then fairly quickly, the group gels.

> The real-life knowledge of the community participants puts into context the academic experience of the students. And the academic knowledge of the students puts into context the real-life experience of the participants.

After each lecture, breakout groups, including mentors and community participants equally dispersed among them, discuss the material. The mentor-led discussion evolves into genuine conversation pretty quickly, and a few weeks in it is difficult to tell mentors apart from the participants. The real-life knowledge of the community participants puts into context the academic experience of the students. And the academic knowledge of the students puts into context the real-life experience of the participants. In some healthy way, the community members become surer of themselves while the undergraduates become less so. There is great respect. And the learning is as reciprocal as it gets.

In one lecture, a prominent politician came in to give a lecture on Hobbes' *Leviathan.* He explained the Hobbesian position that it is necessary for the general population to give up certain liberties and invest authority in their leaders in order to maintain security and peace for the whole society. In some typical university classrooms, this might just be recorded on clicking laptops. Or better yet, a good debate would ensue and discussions about authority, democracy, rights and privilege would unfold.

In this particular class, however, it went haywire. One community member told the politician to go to hell (actually, she used the F-word). She said she'd been disempowered her whole life, so putting more power in some government agent's hands would just take more out of hers. Compelling, and slightly uncomfortable. Then an undergrad student

mentor said that might be fine for some kinds of freedoms, like driving without a seatbelt, but that some freedoms are inalienable so can't be taken or given away. Giving up freedom is the first step to tyranny. Interesting. Then a recent immigrant stood up and said he had just come from a war-torn country. "If you had seen people you loved murdered and raped you would give up almost anything for peace." Everyone was speechless.

Our lecturer was Bob Rae, and he deftly and respectfully weighed in, saying that everyone was likely right, which is why it was such an important discussion. From that point on, the conversation moved fluidly and intelligently through difficult academic material with a constant eye on what serious realities and personal experiences lay in the balance. And it was a very typical night for the program.

RECIPROCITY BETWEEN THE CITY AND THE UNIVERSITY

The university has often been criticized for being an ivory tower of elitism, moral detachment, or abstruse impracticality. Universities do, though, have many terrific programs that reach out to people in the community who might not otherwise be on an academic trajectory. At the U of T we have terrific bridging programs, transitional year programs, and others like the Let's Talk Science initiative, and there are many impressive programs at other institutions as well.[2] The question I want to raise here is how these programs can reach out to the community around us, and also bolster the things we value at the university and address some of the internal 'crises' of our institutions. Can academic outreach be reciprocal?

What do universities seem publicly and typically to value? Of course, academic research and teaching are at the top of the list, as well they should be. We also hear about pushing boundaries, being globally connected, the importance of co-curricular involvement, and the centrality of student experience. We understand the importance of curricular breadth and the need to embrace demographic diversity. We know that multicultural experience enhances student creativity, success, and engagement—we urge and often fund students to go abroad to experience something unfamiliar. Leadership and innovation are the stuff of institutional fundraising campaigns, and talk of learning outcomes is so pervasive that we might begin to think that utility is more important than thought.

We are also now drenched in discussions of the problems at universities. The 'crisis' has been variously attributed to the serious rise in the prevalence (or visibility) of mental health problems in the student body,[3] burgeoning class size, and student apathy. The publish or perish imperative for faculty may also be the malefactor. Or possibly government cutbacks, technocratic and/or bureaucratic anti-intellectualism, the shrinking income gap between university and high school grads, the fear of underemployment of graduates or the devaluation (and underfunding) of humanities and liberal arts. Then there's the clamour for the almighty GPA

and its attendant unhealthy competition. There is a widely held blanket view that universities have been corporatized, and that students are simply entitled career-shoppers who have disengaged from serious study, and faculty have consequently recoiled from the classroom and retreated to research. And sadly, there's no shortage of testimony or data saying that all of this is leaving students lonely, alienated, and feeling hopeless.
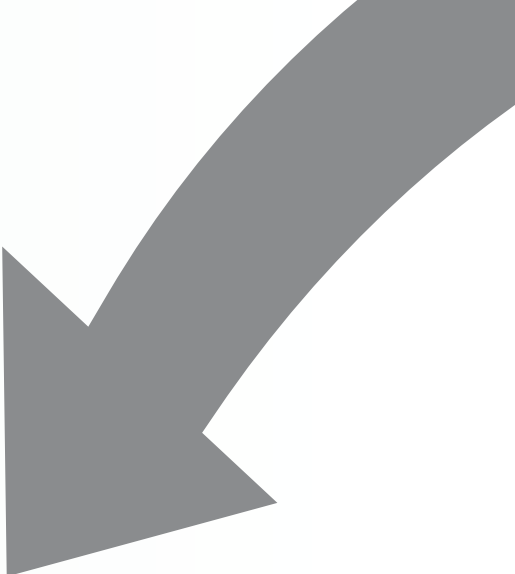
Perhaps there is no real crisis, or perhaps there are so many crises that we should just stop using that language. In any case, there seem to be some serious grounds for concern.

We know that universities can't be everything to everyone. But if we really process even part of the inventory of so-called crises, it's difficult to deny that we need to look for some creative solutions. The National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE)—which many of us can hardly bear to hear mentioned one more time—does have useful data. It would be difficult for it not to, given that over 1500 institutions in the U.S. and Canada have participated and that millions of students have been surveyed.

Even with a healthy dose of skepticism about surveys (and especially the reporting of their results), it is difficult to deny that students would learn more, and arguably learn better, if they had some of the experiences that contribute to engagement. Those include more varied and meaningful student-faculty interaction; a high level of academic challenge; more opportunities to experience diversity and meet with people from different cultural backgrounds; building quality relationships with other students; and having a campus environment where students can have academic and social relationships and conversations outside of the classroom.

The fact that droves of students are saying that they wish they had more faculty contact isn't trivial. They're not asking for more movies in the lecture hall or pedagogy with jokes or to have kegs in the residence halls. They're asking for academic contact, which is great. That brings us to the question of the faculty themselves. The lore is that professors have become disenchanted with students whom they perceive to be overly entitled and dismissive. I don't entirely buy it. I don't believe they have become disenchanted. If anything, they lament the apathy of students, and keep trying. Ideas for the World features very accomplished faculty members who have enthusiastically volunteered their services year after year, and who have now ushered over 500 students through the program. We need to bring faculty and students together outside the classroom.

And when a significant majority of students say they feel very lonely, overwhelmed and anxious, almost 40 per cent say they feel so depressed it is difficult to function, and over nine per cent of students are saying they have seriously

considered committing suicide (and all of that is not just over the course of their lives, but experienced within the past academic year), we have to ask why. We have a responsibility to do what we can to promote healthy campuses. We have to help students not to feel constantly evaluated and wildly stressed out. And we need to do what we can not to isolate them and make them feel like numbers. We need to create more social academic opportunities.

'Fixing' it all is probably impossible, but the Ideas for the World program is an effort to create pockets where we can continue to address these challenges. Student mental health is concretely tended to, professors are unfettered by learning outcomes, and students do not feel isolated. Frank discussion happens, and students meet people from different social, cultural and economic backgrounds. No one is at the mercy of the almighty GPA and everyone can have a social academic experience. The outside world comes in.

Our small lunch discussions bring in professionals from all around and even beyond the university, and address a broad set of disciplines that might not otherwise find a voice at the university. This is a very immediate and relatively easy way of making the university more porous. It brings the city inside and pulls our students' thoughts outside to the concrete realities of the city.

The evening discussions involve all of the above plus community members. While not a study abroad experience, these discussions involve very real and diverse perspectives. Our faculty advisor, Professor John Duncan, wrote an article on this phenomenon in the Autumn 2008 issue of *Mindful*, pointing out that "when non-academics, members of the community, many of whom are objects of our theories in one way or another, are invited to the discussion, our fall into posturing is disrupted." It isn't possible to learn at arm's length in these programs.

At lunch we bring in speakers from the city; at dinner we bring in listeners from the city. Our students learn from all of our visitors, and our visitors gain a great deal from having been here.

Of course, we don't presume to have touched on all the 'crises' of the modern university, much less make a huge dent in the host of issues we face in higher education. Ideas

for the World has, however, proven to be an interesting pocket of experience, blending social, academic, and community elements rather seamlessly and to everyone's advantage. It is convivial learning that connects students to faculty in a way that enriches the experience of both, and at the same time brings the university to its neighbourhood and its neighbours to the university. It allows students to dwell for a while on academic topics that resonate with them, and be intellectually curious without grading, ranking, or having to commit. It also fosters kindness and respect. It makes people feel connected. It's not a typical classroom, but it is still a class. It's not a social gathering, and yet it is. It's not a community outreach project, but it does reach out. And it is pretty inspiring. Student and community members alike have said it stands out as one of the best things they have ever done, and every professor and speaker who has been involved has said they would like to come back.

Porosity doesn't just refer to how much stuff outside can be absorbed. It is also about the empty spaces inside that can be filled. We can let the city in, and let others experience the university. The city, and everything it has to offer, can fill in some of the voids we cite when we speak of our university crises. AM

Kelley Castle is the Dean of Students at Victoria University in the University of Toronto.

1. Humanities for Humanity (H4H) started at Trinity College as a joint initiative between the Office of the Dean of Students and the Ethics, Society and Law (ES&L) program. Since 2009, Victoria College launched Ideas for the World which has included H4H, while adding lunchtime programs and Theatre for Thought.

2. One example with which I'm particularly enamored is University of British Columbia's "Bridge Through Sport" program. It has been running for over ten years, and uses sport as a way of appealing to First Nations and Aboriginal youth, branching out into math, science, and writing. It involves UBC undergraduate students in the process. Of particular note is that it uses sport as a sort of a leveler in the program, and that student volunteers tout it as a "learning exchange" where they learn as much as they teach. See: ubyssey.ca/sports/ubc-rec-building-bridges-694 for a nice student article on this.

3. We now have Canada-wide reports from the National College Health Assessment (NCHA), compiled from the first data set large enough to be reliable in Canada (the U.S. data goes back to 2008 and is the largest known assessment of health in university students ever conducted. 32 post-secondary institutions agreed to pool data from 34,039 students. Alarmingly: 89.3% felt overwhelmed; 63.9% felt very lonely; 56.5% felt overwhelming anxiety; 37.5% felt so depressed it was difficult to function; 9.5% seriously considered suicide; 6.6% intentionally hurt or injured themselves; and 1.3 attempted suicide. For the complete reports see: http://www.achancha.org.

Toward the ambidextrous gown

Mark N. Wexler

Today's academics must continue to universalize knowledge while customizing it for local needs.

Les universitaires d'aujourd'hui doivent continuer d'universaliser le savoir tout en le personnalisant aux besoins locaux

Allow me to plant a marker in your mind. It is the theme of intellectual outreach—the process whereby an academic makes a concerted decision to spend a good portion of his or her time taking scholarly work from the academic heritage of 'the gown' to 'the town'. My aim is to address an invisible boundary between 'the gown' of the academic community and 'the town' of the public at large and discuss the not-too-stable relationship between the two.

In an age that increasingly speaks of citizen science, citizen journalism, Internet medicine, and increasingly (via mass collaboration platforms and open-source intellectual communities) the wisdom of crowds, the role between the academic university and the public (between town and gown) remains an underdeveloped topic from the point of view of academic careers. And, I underline "from the point of view of academic careers."

The same cannot be said for the underdevelopment of this theme with regard to funding models, academic freedom, or the job preparedness of graduates. Typically the town and gown theme is framed by universities as a requirement of survival—achieve public support via enhanced alliances with the broader community, and with ongoing legitimacy secured, stabilize and grow one's budget. In turn the town looks to the gown as a means of providing an intelligent workforce that fuels the growth of competitive regions and nations. Thus the well-worn path between the town and gown discussion is rather simple: the town should invest in the gown in order to attain benefits which cannot easily be found elsewhere. In turn, the gown should strive for scholarly excellence and therein justly receive the favours of the town.

It is my view that this well-worn path between the town and gown is rife with difficulties. The town in its wisdom— a wisdom that increases in intensity and stamina during economic hard times—wants to see the benefits of knowledge transfer from its investment. The town, not surprisingly, is street savvy. In an era in which knowledge is globalized it asks: why in a tough fiscal period, should we invest locally? Why not pluck knowledge out of the ether? Why not piggyback on developments paid for by other investors elsewhere? Sit back, then, return to investing in the local gown when the economy improves?

My solution—and here comes the ambidextrous gown foreshadowed in the title—is to establish a viable reward for scholars who customize and translate their research directly to the town.

One would think that the gown over time has developed an articulate response to the propensity of the town to turn away from local investment during hard economic times. In the playbook of the administrative leaders of the gown there is an ongoing recognition that the university must make allies who are deep-pocketed, politically powerful, and, if and when neither of these is easily secured, a vocal general public ready and prepared to raise its voice on behalf of the now needy university.

As a player in the gown for more than three decades, I must make it clear that the playbook of the administrators translates poorly into the reward system of the scholar/academic (i.e. the grassroots gown member). I have learned, and perhaps am here today due to my subtle violation of the norms and folkways (a quaint sociological phrase for the do's and don'ts of a community), of the traditional town and gown model. The more the everyday gown citizen is cited by others inside the gown community, the more his or her star status soars. This is self-evident. It is axiomatic. The scholarly citation backed by the rigor of peer review and transmission of knowledge into the information or knowledge commons is the hard currency of the super gown member. This is a refined and intellectually rigorous game. It certainly is not for the fainthearted.

Much as I respect the diamond sutra of intellect this produces, there is, dare I say, a weakness to this particular strategic focus. Recall now that the town and its local incarnation turns away from the gown in order to grab knowledge from the ether during tough fiscal times. The scholar feeds this trend by contributing her work to the intellectual commons in order to advance her career. The rational

town members look for a free or a low-cost ride by reducing their contribution to the local gown. Why not ride out the storm? Why not allow themselves to be carried by those elsewhere who are either in the midst of good times or are slower to see the virtue of thrift? A global community of academics have ensured a healthy supply of knowledge for the taking.

My solution—and here comes the ambidextrous gown foreshadowed in the title—is to establish a viable reward for scholars who customize and translate their research directly to the town. This does not mean dismantling the ideal of the global information commons or ceasing to bring one's work to the best and most cited intellectual outlets. It does mean taking an extra step. Reward those who publish well and who are widely funded and cited by their peers. But also create and reward a gown trajectory that encourages academics to bring knowledge into the living rooms, parlours, boardrooms, and civic debates of the town.

On one hand, universalize knowledge; on the other customize it for local users. The customization of knowledge for the local town makes the university a dual or ambidextrous strategist. It must satisfy the universalist criteria of contributing to the knowledge commons. To do so it must reward its best and brightest for publishing, receiving grant money, and contributing to the information commons. On the other hand, it must recognize and reward a means of customizing knowledge so its local application is recognized, appreciated, and integrated into the economy and heartbeat of the town.

To do so the university must slowly and cautiously devolve its reliance upon the university administrator as the primary means of developing town outreach. It ought to

supplement this with a viable group of scholars trained and operating locally who can show and point towards the local value of the gown.

Universities are like all one-headed entities. They worry about the coordination required to engage in an ambidextrous strategy of both universalizing and customizing knowledge. A mission statement should of course get to the point clearly and cleanly. Strategies, however, are not mission statements. Like all those who juggle shifting realities, the key for the juggler is to know how to find a workable balance, an understanding of sequence and preparedness. As one hand shifts a ball, the other sets the next ball in motion. It defines an arc and gently falls into the just-freed hand. Becoming ambidextrous certainly is not easy. It takes practice and hard work.

I encourage university administrators and faculty to develop a reward system for those who not only seek to get cited but whom in finding encouragement in and by the scholarly community—whether in philosophy, chemistry, linguistics or mathematics—take an added step. They customize their knowledge to meet or address local needs. An ambidextrous gown coordinates the joint movements of customizing and universalizing. Gown administrators and faculty must weigh and work out the prioritizing of customizing and universalizing. The university that builds bridges into the information commons and into the local community is a university built for all economic seasons.

Let me summarize this meditation and locate it in the personal—Dr. Mark N. Wexler, the University Professor of Business Ethics and Management at the Segal Graduate School of Business, Simon Fraser University. I have over the years seen the need to supplement the universalist strategy of building the information commons with the work of bringing my discipline into corporate boardrooms, newspaper discussions, public controversies, elementary classrooms and public dialogues at the Carnegie Center, union halls, NGO's reports, and advisory boards. Over the years my career has moved towards recognizing the importance of building local town and gown relations. I presently work with over 45 companies, not-for-profits, government agencies and fledgling social movement groups. In this work, I try hard to show the relevance of the life of the gown to the heartbeat of the town.

I would be remiss to insist upon my own career as an exemplar of this ambidextrous town and gown relationship. There are many options. In the sciences it is vital not only to provide academics and their sponsoring universities with bridging incentives into the corporate world of applied technology, but also to make sure that those bringing technology to market are aware of recent advances in science and mechanics. As well, bringing science into the living rooms of the nation via high quality treatments of scientific topics relevant to contemporary life is vital. The issue in making science popular is not to dumb it down, but to create an excitement about this approach to applying knowledge.

Ambidexterity in the social sciences requires far more than government involvement in matching grants. I believe the university must become more involved in contemporary controversies, with discussions about how the prison system is run, about homelessness, vaccination in the public interest, and so on. The public is interested in the view corridor provided by the university. However, in my view it must actually be a view corridor, which acknowledges and deals with the controversy rather than presenting the politically correct point of view. This entails a willingness, within what has been a rather tight-lipped version of the university, to encourage academics interested in entering public debate with an informed point of view.

From the point of view of the ambidextrous gown, there is a great deal to be done in the humanities and arts. While scholarship in these fields is ongoing and ought to continue, improvements in the town and gown relationship would be forthcoming if the university were to provide incentives for faculty members to produce public commentaries, theatre reviews, historical analyses of particular movies, and engaging public discussions of the performance of political figures in public venues. The arts and humanities become part and parcel of the ambidextrous gown when they are understood to be an integral part of the everyday culture of those who live in the town.

Perhaps my version of the ambidextrous gown is too eager to please. The crucial point, one that must not be forgotten when addressing 'town and gown' is that the desire to increase good relations with the town is not the aim of the university, nor should truth and the pursuit of principled knowledge be bent to suit public sensibility. Rather, the university must work out how to develop its gown strategy, and align it to its pursuit of principled knowledge. Ambidexterity requires coordination. It requires that the university take a genuine interest in the town, get involved, make friends, and develop ways of integrating the vocabulary of the university into the daily life of the town. While this may seem a bit idealistic, it is one of the vital goals of a sustainable university in the 21st century.

Knowing what I do now, I recognize that it is not simple to create mature relationships between institutions and their communities. But without a concerted and aligned strategy to bring together the town with the university and faculty, the latter will grow increasingly isolated. AM

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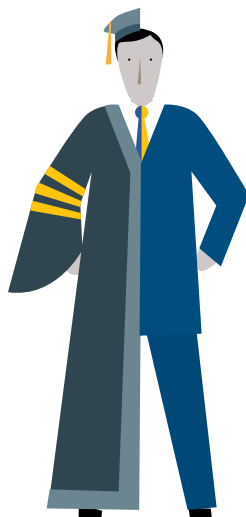
BEYOND ALL IN THE FAMILY:
Community-based research in Canada

Katherine A. H. Graham

Community-based research

Community-based research has been building momentum in Canada. Can this forward progress be sustained?

La recherche communautaire crée l'élan au Canada depuis un certain temps. Ces avancées peuvent-elles être maintenues?

> To varying degrees of explicitness, the relationship between researcher and community is reciprocal with outputs and outcomes that benefit each party.

The Roots of Community-based Research in Canada

Research about communities has a long tradition in Canadian intellectual life, perhaps beginning with the efforts of early Christian missionaries to understand the language and ways of the Aboriginal peoples they sought to convert. Reading the fictionalized narrative about these efforts found in Joseph Boyden's *The Orenda*, it is clear that these efforts conceived of communities and the people in them as subjects, or even as de-humanized objects of inquiry.

Fast forward to the first 60 years of the twentieth century and very little had changed. Researchers, now largely university-based, remained interested in the study of communities. To be sure, there was a level of community outreach and engagement in some fields, including agriculture and public health. But Canadian universities, as institutions, generally lacked the robust mandate for extension and community betterment found among the American land grant universities. This absence of a formal mandate for public engagement and the genuine scholarly curiosity of university researchers contributed to a perceived need to document and theorize about communities and the people in them, without considering the needs and interests of the communities themselves. The grassroots impact of university researchers' work was thus sometimes problematic to say the least. For example, the eminent sociologist Jean Burnet became *persona non grata* in rural Alberta after publication of her book *Next-year Country; A Study of Rural Social Organization in Alberta*. The standard joke that "the average (pick your community) family consists of a father, mother, two children and an anthropologist," has its origins in this period of research.

The paradigm of community research in Canada began to change in the 1960s and early 1970s. The social activism of the time, often fuelled by federal government funding of organizations such as the Company of Young Canadians and the Opportunities for Youth program, propelled young participants into engagement with communities in need or under stress. These experiences were not forgotten as participants moved to university or returned to graduate school. Further, faculty members were increasingly engaged as citizen advocates and researchers on major community issues. The participation of faculty members from the University of Toronto, York, and Ryerson universities in battles such as Stop Spadina (a campaign against a proposed expressway along Spadina Avenue) and in reforming governance in the City of Toronto more generally are important examples. But university researchers also became actively engaged with community groups on school closure issues (for example in Ottawa) and community social economy initiatives (for example in Pointe Saint-Charles in Montreal). In 1979, the Service aux collectivités was established at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) to engage with communities on a range of social and economic issues. It continues to be a vital player in community-based research in Quebec. Among its hallmark contributions is the development of Quebec's highly affordable childcare program.

There were additional key influences on the development of community-based research during the 1980s and 1990s. The role of HIV/AIDS activism in changing the paradigm of university research engagement was crucial. The mantra "nothing about us without us," became a dominant discourse from the HIV/AIDS community in the 1980s. This had a major impact on the model of research funding used by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). It also pushed community-based research on various aspects of HIV/AIDS into the public policy arena, demonstrating how traditional barriers between researcher and subject and policy maker can be broken to good effect.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) had a similar impact on community-based research. In its earliest days, RCAP developed research protocols and policies to

guide its commissioned research. The RCAP adopted the principles of mutual respect, reciprocity of benefit between community and researcher, and the need for researchers to be accountable and report back to the communities in which they were engaged. The RCAP's research principles also played a seminal role in the development of a new policy statement by Canada's research granting councils: *Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans,* in particular, the chapter titled "Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada." This is the first such policy statement by a national research funding body in the world.

Concurrently, important new principles for research data on Aboriginal communities were created as First Nations assumed control of the First Nations and Inuit Regional Longitudinal Health Survey (RHS). OCAP—ownership, control, access and possession of all data related to Aboriginal peoples and communities—is the core precept of the RHS and has been since 1998. Today, OCAP is the foundation for the relationship between Aboriginal communities and researchers, regardless of the focus of the research. The importance of these developments should not be underestimated in shaping Canadian practice in community research, particularly in social sciences, humanities and health. Aboriginal research is a stated priority of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and the Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR) include an Institute of Aboriginal Peoples' Health.

Community-based Research Today

It could be argued that the current state of community-based research in Canadian universities is shaped by three influences: the personal inclination of some faculty and students to engage with community as a central part of their personal research agenda; the availability of tri-council support for community research (especially through SSHRC); and the heightened awareness on the part of universities that they have an institutional contribution to make in building sustainable communities in the broadest sense.

I would venture that today every university in Canada has a group of faculty who engage with communities in research about community-based issues. Their work is with and not on communities. The communities involved may be place-based or communities of identity or interest. The principle that community benefit should result from this research is foundational. To varying degrees of explicitness, the relationship between researcher and community is reciprocal with outputs and outcomes that benefit each party. These outputs and outcomes must by necessity differ between researchers and community groups. Communities are rarely interested in the peer-reviewed article, and need research in a more accessible—and actionable—form.

Until recently, faculty engaged in this type of community research have sometimes toiled in the shadows. They have received little formal support in the way of funding. Academic publication of community-based research results has proven difficult in some fields and peer recognition has been relatively weak. For some, this had led to challenges in promotion and tenure. Fortunately, greater tri-council recognition of community research, and a growing awareness of the role of universities in building links with communities, has begun to overcome the obscurity problem.

In 2000, SSHRC took a bold step to support community-based research. It launched the Community University Research Alliance (CURA) program to support collaborative research between universities and community organizations. Under this program, SSHRC would provide up to $1 million over five years to support research, student training, and knowledge mobilization. The idea of reciprocal benefit to community and university was explicit and central. There were provisions in CURA that enabled a community organization to hold SSHRC funds, although this rarely occurred in practice.

The CURA program was immediately well-subscribed. There were over 100 applications in the first round, and approximately 10 were successful. The energy generated by the first rounds of CURA funding was crucial in launching a hybrid research and engagement forum in Canada. In 2003, the University of Saskatchewan hosted the first CUExpo (Community University Engagement Exposition). Although other aspects of community-university engagement, for example community engaged pedagogy, were part of the CUExpo remit, community-based research was the core focus. This first CUExpo established a community of practice across Canada for community research. CUExpo is now a biennial conference that draws participants from around the world. The organizers include communities, universities, colleges, government, and local voluntary organizations from the host community. The fifth CUExpo will be held in 2015 in Ottawa, hosted by Carleton University.

SSHRC's commitment to community research has not flagged since the creation of CURA. The CURA program has now been replaced by two community oriented partnership programs, the Partnership Development Grant, which is intended to support early stage research relationships between academics and communities, and the Partnership Grant Program that provides major grants of up to $2.5 million over a maximum of seven years. The application numbers for these programs are high with in-kind and cash contributions from the researchers' home institution being the norm.

This brings us to the institutional changes within universities to support community research. There are a number of factors at play. One is demonstrable community need, especially by communities that are under stress or are facing an unprecedented opportunity that requires research expertise for success. There are a number of Canadian universities that have a long institutional commitment to engaging communities with their research capacity. These include, but are not limited to the previously mentioned Service aux collectivités at UQAM, the Harris Centre at Memorial University, and the Rural Development Institute at Brandon University. Increasingly, Canadian universities are recognizing that community research should be a core element of a broader community engagement strategy. Further, there is nascent recognition that community-based research organizations are important players in community research. These groups are able to work with universities to mutual benefit. Examples include the Centre for Community-Based Research in Kitchener; the Arctic Institute of Community-Based Research, based in Whitehorse; the Community Sector Council of Newfoundland and Labrador; and Community Campus Partnerships for Health (CCPH), a bridging organization founded in the U.S. but active in Canada for the last few years.

Universities and community-based research organizations, along with faculty engaged in community-based research, came together in 2008 to establish Community Based Research Canada (CBRC). CBRC is a national network that works in the domains of policy advocacy and engagement; capacity building among faculty, students and community organizations engaged in collaborative research; and in building Canada's community of practice for community-based research through communications and network support (for more information, visit www.communityresearchcanada.ca.)
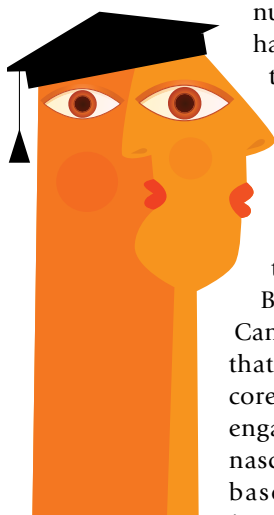
Work is ongoing through CBRC and through other collaborative initiatives on issues that linger for academics doing community-based research. These include recognition for tenure and promotion; developing and disseminating best practices in community-based research; and ethical practice in community engagement by university scholars. Even though Canada is a world leader in developing research ethics related to Aboriginal research, much remains to be done on ethical standards for community-based research more broadly.

Some may see sustainability as another challenge. Will funding priorities change? Will younger scholars see the demands of community engagement and the attendant rewards as contrary to their long term career interests? The objective need for high quality community-based research in Canada (and beyond), and the rewards for communities and researchers when community-engaged research is done well, are clear. It is therefore imperative we work to ensure funding stability for community-based research, and that the work of researchers in this area is properly recognized. AM

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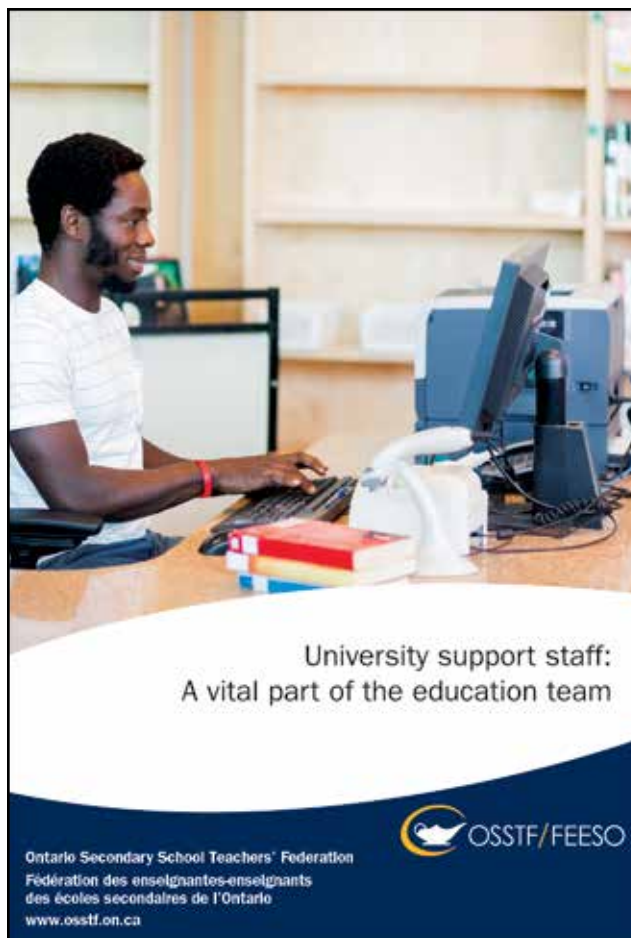
TOWN AND GOWN GO TO THE MOVIES

Mark Langer

What can film tell us about the town and gown relationship?

Qu'est-ce que peut nous raconter le cinéma à propos de la relation entre l'éducation et la ville?

The relationship between the university campus and the non-academic community is a perennial and time-honoured issue. In modern Canada, the Ezra Street riot at Wilfred Laurier in 1995, the years-long cancellation of Queen's University's Homecoming due to the Aberdeen Street riot of 2005, and the Fanshawe College St. Patrick's Day riots of 2013 are instances of the sometimes fractious interaction between town and gown. The phenomenon of conflict between town and gown dates at least as far back as Oxford's Battle of St. Scholastica Day in 1355, where a tavern brawl resulted in townspeople attacking the university. While residents of communities bordering a university might harbour hidden desires to storm the local campus with pitchforks and scythes when kegger season is at its height, contemporary relations between town and gown go beyond such frictions. Indeed, many communities see universities and colleges as vital to the local economy and as engines of progress. In Ontario, towns such as Milton, Brantford, and Orillia are eagerly pursuing the development of local academic campuses.

Cultural attitudes to the relationships between universities and their surrounding communities are not only shaped by their interactions, but are also affected by portrayals of such interplay in popular media. Town and gown depictions go back to the early days of cinema. In *Daddy Long Legs* (1919), Mary Pickford plays a poor and brutalized orphanage inmate. A new trustee of the institution anonymously offers to pay for her college education. While at Princeton, the Pickford character is torn by her attraction to both a young freshman and the older uncle of her roommate, as well as by the secret of her humble origin. These economic, social, and romantic conflicts are resolved, following her rejection of the freshman, when her secret benefactor is revealed as her roommate's uncle. Economic and social inequity is resolved by the romantic linking of town and gown. More importantly, the film demonstrates a series of antinomies that are frequently associated with the town and gown relationship: upper vs. lower class, intellect vs. emotion, order vs. disorder. These dualities provide the thematic structure of subsequent town and gown films.

> Indeed, many communities see universities and colleges as vital to the local economy and as engines of progress.

Courtship involving a character from the town and one from the gown was to become one of the major themes in cinematic depictions of interaction between campus and the world outside. In *The Blot* (1920), the daughter of an impoverished professor lives next door to a working class family. The professor and his family eke out a living on his miserable salary, while the plebian family next door, lacking both refinement and education, prosper. The neighbour's eldest son is in love with the professor's daughter, although it is clear that his case is hopeless for reasons of cultural capital. The situation is rectified when a wealthy young student realizes the importance of academic pursuits, falls in love with the young woman, and persuades his tycoon father to raise faculty salaries.

In the later 1920s, postsecondary institutions came to be depicted as places attended by students who aspired to be a 'Big Man on Campus' and show 'pep,' while continuing the emphasis on finding a suitable mate. Getting an education was at best tangential to these pursuits. Characters played by stars like Buster Keaton or Harold Lloyd engaged in a period of scholastic hijinks and physical activity before settling down to marriage and career responsibilities. While university provided the setting for this maturation, the local community often provided the mate. In *The Freshman* (1925), protagonist Harold Lamb (played by Lloyd) learns to be himself through a maturation process resulting, in part, from his courtship with the daughter of his boardinghouse landlady. Here, university is the location and off-campus romance is the means by which the hero re-enters the larger community as a mature citizen. The pattern was to be repeated in many other Jazz Age films.

These earlier town and gown films tended to present universities and colleges as spaces separate from society at large, and attendance as a rite of passage before rejoining society as an adult. During the Depression, screen universities became sites both of social concern and escapism. Postsecondary institutions were often presented as fantasy spaces outside the bounds of society and freed from the concerns of the Depression, where one could both escape and challenge social norms with impunity. In *Collegiate* (1935), a young playboy inherits a women's college from his aunt and decides to turn it into a charm school, as academic pursuits are useless in a time of economic crisis. The hero hires entertainers as faculty and advertises in fashion magazines. Instead of graduation, the program of studies ends with students and faculty participating in a musical revue. By replacing academics with the pursuit of popular entertainment, he turns the school into a success. In *College Swing* (1938), comedienne Gracie Allen plays the descendant of the founder of Alden College, whose 1738 will stipulated that the college would become the property of any female descendant of his who passed her graduation examinations within 200 years of his death. Flashing forward to 1938, Gracie—who is, unfortunately, an idiot—manages to achieve this feat, albeit by cheating. Now in charge of the institution, she declares that she will banish entrance exams and possession of a high school diploma as prerequisites for admission. Gracie installs new faculty, including a professor of economics who says that the only reason people go to college is because they are rich and their fathers went to college before them. He counsels his students to sleep through his lectures, as he does. Gracie also hires a woman as professor of 'practical love.' Instead of university being a transitional space to adulthood, it becomes a carefree refuge from the Depression, a celebration of popular culture, and a rejection of both class and intellect.

During WWII such attitudes to the relationship between town and gown were seen as socially irresponsible. Universities were portrayed as sites where the ideological struggles between Nazism and the free world took place. Professors were transformed into both victims of the Axis and leading fighters in the struggle against fascism. Gary Cooper's professor character in *Cloak and Dagger* (1946) becomes an OSS agent parachuted into Italy to rescue a physicist whose knowledge is vital to the Nazi nuclear weapons program. Reflecting the involvement of many faculty members in the war effort, academics became significant players in the welfare of the nation at large during this period. *The Male Animal* (1942) concerns a professor who is threatened with dismissal for being a Communist after reading a letter by Bartolomeo Vanzetti to his class. The professor becomes a successful defender of freedom of speech against the reactionary prejudices of the Board of Governors. Gown saves American values from town.

In the post-war period, engagement with the public sphere continued, but often by returning to the pre-war convention of academics participating in popular culture. In *She Went to the Races* (1945), Dr. Ann Wotters learns that her uncle has been dismissed from his research institute because of a lack of financing. To raise the $20,000 he needs for his research, Ann and her uncle's colleagues devise a foolproof way to predict winners in horse races. This leads Ann to meet and fall in love with a horse owner, to best her rival for the love interest's affection, and to retire from research to marital bliss on a farm. The film portrays a romantic conflict between intellect and academe on the one hand, and romance and ordinary life on the other. When trying to decide between these alternatives near the film's end, Ann turns to one of her uncle's colleagues for advice. "What does science say?" she asks. He responds, "Science, for once, keeps its big mouth shut." Matters of the heart prevail as popular culture and nature triumph over intellect and the academy.

A similar theme plays out in *It Happens Every Spring* (1949), where a young academic's job and future marriage to the daughter of the university president depends on his completion of his PhD. But an errant baseball crashes through his lab window, destroying the equipment producing his formula to protect trees from insects. The project now can't be completed in time to get tenure. While cleaning up, he discovers that the baseball had been soaked in his formula, and now is repelled by wood. To finance his research, the scientist becomes a major-league baseball pitcher. In the process, he is befriended by a working class catcher, who integrates the academic into society at large. When the professor's fiancé discovers that he is a professional ball player, she shares the secret with her parents, and they all become ardent fans of the game. The college president entertains a potential donor at one of these games, resulting in a donation that solves the institution's financial problems. The protagonist becomes the head of a new research unit and his future romance and career are assured through the reconciliation of town and gown.

During the 1950s McCarthy period, campuses were suspected of harbouring ideological criminals who were a threat to American society. In *The Stranger* (1950), Orson Welles plays a fugitive Nazi war criminal disguised as a faculty member at an American college who is exposed by the patient investigation of a policeman. In many science-fiction films of the period, scientists are portrayed as fifth column collaborationists with alien invaders as seen in films like *It Conquered the World* (1956), where a scientist helps invading Venusians, or *The Thing* (1951), where the head scientist at the Arctic base aids the titular alien

YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN

ANNIE HALL

A BEAUTIFUL MIND

after recovering a crashed flying saucer. In such cases, the common sense of the non-academic characters saves the earth from these professorial traitors.

During the late 1950s and the 1960s, with new social mores, the relationship between universities and the larger community both changed and perpetuated earlier depictions. In *Teacher's Pet* (1958), a veteran newspaper reporter takes a class in journalism to show up the female professor. The professional antipathy between the two of them, and the implied conflict between academe and the school of hard knocks, is resolved through their romance. In *The Nutty Professor* (1963), a retelling of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,* Jerry Lewis plays a nerdy scientist who is transformed by his formula into a playboy and lounge lizard.

The conflict between the mind, represented by the professor, and the body, represented by the alter ego's immersion in the off-campus world, is resolved by the professor's discovery of true love. In *The Gambler* (1974), a literature professor is drawn by his gambling habit into the criminal underworld, antagonizing gangsters and a pimp in the process. In all these cases, Town and Gown are seen as separate realms, whose borders can only be crossed through emotional excess or social dysfunction.

Young Frankenstein (1974)'s protagonist, Frederick Frankenstein, is a professor of medicine in an American university and the descendant of the original Frankenstein monster's creator. The university represents logic and control. Frederick, who disavows his forbear as a "cuckoo," insists on the primacy of intellect and reason during a class experiment when he demonstrates the brain's domination of the body. This seems to extend to Frederick's love life, as his sexual desires are thwarted by his prudish fiancé, Elizabeth. When Frederick leaves campus and goes to Transylvania to obtain his inheritance, he is plunged into a different realm, where the body's primacy and illogic is evident: Igor's hump (of which the hunchback is unaware) keeps moving from side to side. Taking up his grandfather's research, Frederick fashions a new Frankenstein monster, but inadvertently equips it with an abnormal brain. The result is a creature of the body, who proceeds to run amok. On one rampage, the monster seduces the all-too-willing Elizabeth. The monster is finally tamed by transferring Frederick's mind to the creature, and the film ends with two marriages. In one, the now tame monster reads the *Wall Street Journal* while bickering with Elizabeth. In the other, Frederick's assistant and new wife Inga wonders what her husband got in return for his mind. She discovers that it is the monster's "enormous schwanzstucker," signifying the triumph of the body over mind.

Woody Allen's *Annie Hall* (1977) continues the antinomies in the realms of gown and town. *Annie Hall*'s protagonist, Alvy Singer, is an intellectual comedian who entertains for liberal causes, often on campuses. He goes through a series of failed relationships because he cannot integrate the world of the mind with that of the body. His first marriage fails because he retreats into political analysis as a way of avoiding intimacy with his wife. His second wife is an academic who refuses his sexual advances because "there are people from The New Yorker in the next room." While his attraction to Annie Hall is sexual, his intellectual mentorship leads to her attending university and beginning an affair with a professor— a step to the end of their romance.

More recent films dealing with town and gown continue in a similar pattern. In *A Beautiful Mind* (2001), a researcher's affliction with mental illness is linked to his fantasies of Cold War paranoia set in an off-campus location and featuring imaginary non-academic government agents. Leaving academe and seeking treatment leads to no improvement. His path back to sanity is realized only by blotting out his madness through a return to campus and his research. *The Social Network* (2010) depicts the relationship of town and gown as one between Mark Zuckerberg—representing California, youth, and meritocracy—and the Winkelvoss twins, standing for Harvard, hypocritical control, old money, and faculty privilege. Mark's journey from gown to town results in his fortune.

Throughout the history of cinema, town and gown issues have been treated with remarkable structural consistency, despite variations in thematic emphasis from period to period. These depictions have both been formed by, and shaped public perceptions of town and gown as two separate worlds. Crossing the borders between the two is always portrayed as a challenging journey, one with uncertain results. AM

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Putting research to work for the community

Kathleen Bloom

Examining a model of knowledge mobilization between community organizations and the university.

Examen d'un modèle de mobilisation du savoir entre les organisations communautaires et l'université.

We count on social service organizations to take care of problems faced by our families, friends, and neighbours. Yet these organizations are at great risk. An estimated 50 per cent of these social agencies operate as charities and, within this group, 49 per cent rely purely on volunteer staff.

Public and private funding is simply not keeping up with demand. To obtain funding for even the bare minimum of services, benefactors are increasingly demanding that social service organizations demonstrate that their proposed policies and programs are based on the best available research and evidence. This demand is both reasonable and easy to make, but difficult to meet without the human and material resources that we take for granted in universities.

On the other side of the fence, academics are being increasingly pressured—especially in the social sciences and humanities—to show that their work has positive and practical social impact. These disciplines also attract a core of graduate and undergraduate students who come to university because they want to make a difference to society. It is a pity that these motivated students often have trouble obtaining employment after graduation commensurate with their interests and their scholarly and research excellence.

Thankfully, vibrant community-university partnerships can offer some small but sensible solutions to community needs and academic imperatives. Knowledge mobilization services are a good example of this. In effect, the university contributes the human and material resources and the community contributes a need for scholarly research in specific, real-world contexts. Students provide the energy and skills. Capacity is built for potential careers in the new knowledge economy. Everyone benefits.

For the past seven years we have built and honed a model for knowledge mobilization services at the University of Waterloo, and it seems to work. Community agencies ask university students in research methods courses to review and report on research related to the organizations' mission or policies. Through this process, research published in academic journals is put to practical use and informs board room discussions and decision making by community leaders.

The heart of our community-university partnership model is the systematic review. The same rigorous methods that academics use to conduct primary research are used in creating research reviews for community partners: reliability, validity, and transparency. This means that if another person conducted a review of journal articles at the same time, using the same systematic methods, they would draw the same conclusions about what the research says. This process goes beyond reporting one researcher's single study. Systematic reviews weigh the accumulated evidence. Systematic reviews are designed to be exhaustive and inclusive.

Systematic reviews are the mainstay of knowledge translation in the medical and health sciences. They help professionals create practice guidelines. Many are created and disseminated by the international Cochrane Collaboration, which provides the gold standard for systematic review methods. The difference in our work is that systematic reviews are created at the request and to serve the immediate needs of a specific community organization. They are not generated by the disciplinary interests of the researchers.

In a sense, the university and the community co-create systematic reviews. They work together through courses developed at the University of Waterloo: Community Based Research at the undergraduate level and Knowledge Mobilization to Serve Society at the graduate level. Here is how it works: review questions solicited from community partners are vetted to ensure their educational appropriateness, time frame, and the anticipated skills and interests of the students. To show the students that their work will have uptake and impact, community partners explain how the results will be used by the agency, when, in what way, and by whom. Will the results go to a board meeting, be used in a funding proposal, or go directly to the agency's clients? Knowing how their work will be used motivates students and provides direction for final dissemination style and formats (slide show, policy brief, summary report, etc.). At the same time, students in the class are taught to apply to secondary research the methods that they have already learned for primary research. Course materials such as the 2005 textbook, *Systematic Reviews in the Social Sciences* by Mark Petticrew and Helen Roberts, provide important background to the work.

Here is an example. Recently, research has been reported in the media suggesting that drug treatments for Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) may have severe negative side effects for certain children. Parents whose children receive developmental and behavioural services from Infant and Child Development Services Peel are naturally concerned. Consequently, the agency's manager
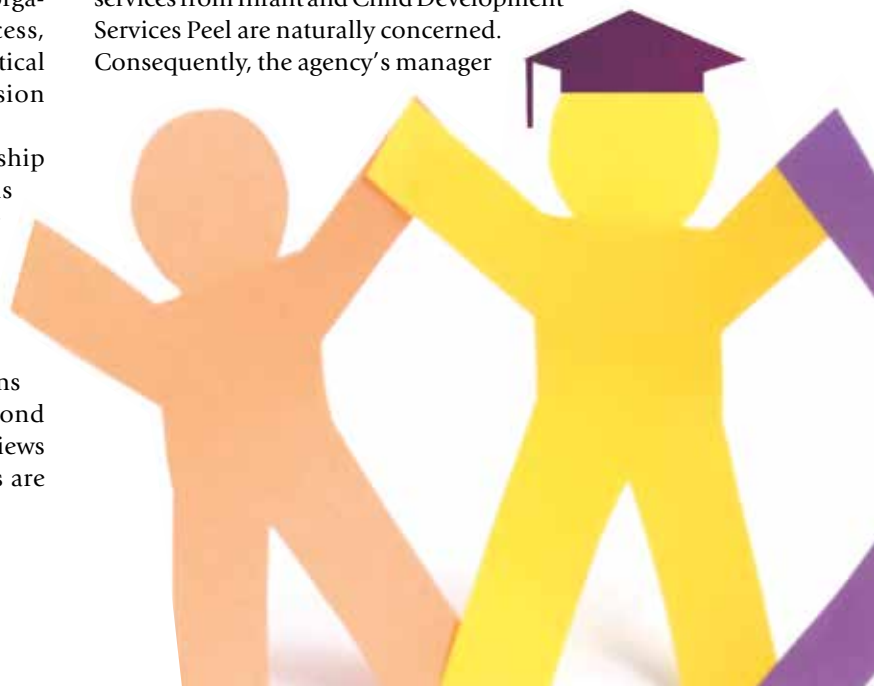
proposed this question to the students: "What does recent research say about the effectiveness of treatments for children with ADHD that do not involve drugs?" Over the course of the term, a five-student team conducted the systematic review. It included all studies published in the two previous years. Of the 180 studies that the students identified, 53 studies attempted to answer the question scientifically with either head-to-head comparison of treatments or case studies of interventions. The research showed that behavioural rewards are still an efficient and effective method, but exercise and neurofeedback are also gaining recognition. The full results are posted at www.kimpact.ca/howwethink.

Over the term, students sometimes posed clarifying questions to the agencies by email, teleconference, and in person. Given the collaboration between community partners and student researchers, one might ask: How is the potential bias in interpreting and reporting results managed? Might community partners influence the results in favour of what they would like to see as supportive evidence for their vision, their funding proposals, and for validating their already existing programming? To deal with this potential problem, community agency input in the research review is limited to presentation, justification, and clarification of the research question. Community agencies play no role in gathering or analyzing the journal articles.

At the end of the term, the students report their results to the agency members. Typically the reports are first summarized for the community partners in classroom presentations. The questions that partners ask help the students highlight issues in the final written report. For example, community partners for the ADHD review asked: What was the most frequently studied method of treatment delivery? Did any studies address problems of children in identified cultural groups?

More than 50 systematic reviews have been conducted through the knowledge mobilization courses at the University of Waterloo over the past seven years. The model was developed in interdisciplinary graduate courses offered for nine terms. The course generated high interest, and the waiting list exceeded

available space each term (16 students, four projects). Students enrolled in the course came from all faculties in the university except Mathematics. The model was a success.

Community partners spoke highly of the quality of the final systematic reviews, commending them for the "layering of easily readable materials on top of progressively more depth." Others spoke of the value of the course to their organization, stating for example, "[the course] saved me countless hours of research and has packaged this material into a product that I can put to use in my business right away" and, "while working on funding applications for my program expansion, this report will be my 'bible'." Students made similar comments. One student said that "by actually doing a project with a stakeholder from beginning to end I've developed a better appreciation for the role of society in research and I've also seen how, with only a few tweaks to the overall research process, knowledge acquired can actually reach those who want it." Another student commented that, "a knowledge mobilization course should be an essential part of training and education for all graduate students and researchers. Understanding the research process is incomplete without it."

Thus far, a few students have gained employment as a result of their training. For example, after completing the graduate course and serving as the teaching assistant, one student is now the manager of knowledge exchange at a Canadian chronic disease not-for-profit organization in Ottawa. Other students report greater ease in obtaining research assistantships, co-op positions, and public health placements due to their training in knowledge mobilization.

After the nine terms, the course was scaled from a transdisciplinary graduate course offered by the Faculty of Arts to an upper-level undergraduate course in the Psychology Department. The 46 undergraduate students who have completed the course over the three terms that it has been offered successfully created 13 systematic reviews.

As examples, this year Keystone Child, Youth and Family Services requested and received a review of the research on the effectiveness, costs, and characteristics of short-term residential stabilization programs for youth in mental health crises. Conestoga College wanted to know

what the research says about using simulation of clinical practice in training physiotherapy and occupational therapy assistants.

Besides motivating students to learn systematic review methods, community partners also expand our dissemination strategies beyond those of a traditional academic report. For example, Infant and Child Development Services Halton taught us that review results need to be presented in one-page fact sheets when being delivered to government for funding policy decisions. Some agencies ask for narrated slide shows that allow managers to transfer review results from the student researchers to agency staff directly and effortlessly. In other cases, detailed research reports are translated by the community partners for their clients. A manager of one of the agencies gave us the following feedback: "I use the ADHD info every time I have a clinic and a client wants to talk with me about their options other than medication for ADHD." For example, a client had an opportunity to enroll her son with ADHD in a class in which they start the day by running up to four kilometres. The research review helped clarify the decision: "on the basis of what your students had told us, [the mother of the boy] enrolled him, and she says that three months later, he can run four kilometres, is full of pride about that, and, his ability to focus his attention has increased dramatically. She is ecstatic, the kid feels better about himself and the whole family functions better, she tells me."

The university makes the course possible and is pivotal in providing extraordinary library and internet resources. Students complete their exhaustive literature searches on library databases such as Scopus®, a database of over 20,000 scholarly journals. University access to RefWorks™ facilitates the team's management of journal articles. Desire2Learn® provides students with a platform on which to collaborate.

The University of Waterloo has a mandate (outlined in its Sixth Decade Plan, 2007-2017) to "Continue to strive to maximize its academic and societal relevance by: Working with partners in the public and private sectors to promote co-op education and knowledge transfer… Providing service to society through cultural enrichment and knowledge transfer." By offering both human and material resources through our courses, the university keeps this promise to its community.

Our knowledge mobilization courses are analogous but different from what is known as service learning. Students in the knowledge mobilization course learn about what their community agency does, what its needs are, and how the students can help. But they do this in their role as researchers. They see first-hand how research is useful beyond academia. From their contact with community partners, students learn about non-academic careers. Students who are set on a career in academia also benefit

from the research review skills learned in the course. One graduate student remarked, "Having acquired these skills I will be able to use them in other projects, such as my current MA thesis research."

As we continue to strengthen our model for knowledge mobilization partnerships, the next steps are clear. First, our graduate level course was cancelled due to the lack of a funding model for interdisciplinary courses within the university, even though we know that students benefit from working with peers from other disciplines. Students reported that they valued the opportunity "to work with students from different programs and learn from them" and found that "by collaborating with people from different backgrounds the class and [the] project [were] strengthened. Knowledge mobilization would not function so well without such a diverse set of people." We need a place in the university where interdisciplinary research, training, and service to the community can be coordinated and nurtured. Fortunately, the undergraduate course is currently secured in the Psychology Department.

Second, we need to develop employment capacity for students trained to serve the needs of society through knowledge mobilization. Students are often drawn to the university for programs and courses that promise good job prospects. But the creation of jobs relevant to systematic reviews requires that community organizations see the value of knowledge mobilization for their decisions. And they need the funding to create these positions.

Given the impossible strain on the budgets of community agencies from burgeoning demand for services, not only do community partners lack human resources to do their own knowledge mobilization but they even have to borrow from Peter to pay Paul when they assign staff to act as the liaison between the university and their agency. Community agencies believe wholeheartedly in the value of evidence-based practice, but often lack the resources to make this commitment a reality.

Our next step is to develop a method of estimating the economic benefits of connecting university research to social service. If successful, the findings may increase the demand for jobs in knowledge mobilization—demand that our students are well-prepared to meet. These students know that academic research matters to the policy and program decisions that affect the rest of society. We hope that our knowledge mobilization model becomes a key mechanism by which communities and universities pool their intelligence and resources to put social science and humanities research to enhanced use. AM

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Doing the PPP:
A SKEPTICAL PERSPECTIVE

Leo Groarke and Beverley Hamilton

Program prioritization—all the rage at Canadian campuses—may be more trouble than it is worth.

La priorité des programmes, qui fait fureur sur les campus canadiens, pourrait ne pas en valoir la peine.

"We're doomed" she said.

"She" is a dean at another university. Her name might easily be added to those of a long list of prognosticators predicting doom and gloom for universities. Reasons for their pessimism come readily to mind: funding cutbacks, large—sometimes enormous—pension deficits, costs escalating more rapidly than revenues, demographic trends reducing the numbers of students available to enroll, increasing competition from the colleges, and technological developments that are challenging traditional modes of course delivery.

But the dean in question wasn't commenting on these issues, at least not directly. Her angst was a response to a par-

ticular way of dealing with them—to her university's decision to undertake a program prioritization process commonly known by its acronym, PPP.

The most influential advocate of this approach is Robert C. Dickeson. Despite its dry title, his book, *Prioritizing Academic Programs and Services*, has become something of a bestseller. An impressive number of universities in the United States and now in Canada are adopting it as a how-to manual for PPP. The heart of Dickeson's process is a review of all programs that aims to rank them in a way that enables a university to decide what programs it should cut, consolidate, or complement as it attempts to put its financial house in order.

Variants of PPP all share the notion that universities should review and rank their programs– academic and non-academic—in order to pick and choose among them. In Ontario at least, the decision to undertake PPP has sometimes been touted as proof that that an institution is willing to face up to the issues of the day.

We have a different view of PPP. Not because we think that difficult decisions about the cutting and consolidation of university programs can be avoided. It would be Pollyannaish to think that the gathering storm will soon abate and allow universities to return to heady days without the current budgetary pressures. In such a context, PPP can be useful, primarily because it can provide a university with important data that can inform the difficult decisions it must make. That said, PPP is frequently carried out in a way that damages morale (sometimes severely), creates conflict, and makes it more, not less, difficult to make key decisions.

At a time when PPP is emerging as the latest in a series of management movements that have captivated a generation of university leaders—Total Quality Management (TQM), Continuous Improvement, Lean Management, and so on—we want to share some doubts about the move in this direction. In doing so, we hope to make the headlong rush to PPP more circumspect.

One of the problems with PPP is its cost. We are not thinking of the sums that universities spend on the professional consultants and assistants who direct and carry out their PPP analyses (though these sums can be considerable). Our concern is the extent to which PPP reduces a university's ability to focus on its central responsibilities of teaching and research. PPP is a very complex process and the work that it requires—establishing a PPP methodology and applying it to all the programs (hundreds in a small university, thousands in a large one)—requires the atten-

It is not hard to imagine the disruptive effects of rank and yank on the morale and well-being of individual employees.
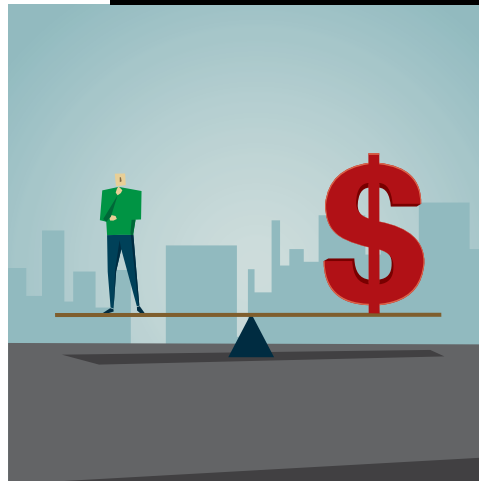
tion of a small army of people who must devote an inordinate number of hours to this task. Especially in a time of constrained resources, one must ask whether this is the best way to use the limited resources a university has at its disposal.

To fully appreciate what PPP requires, one must consider some of the complications that make the application of PPP difficult and time consuming. To take only a few examples, Dickeson's process suggests that one assess individual programs by measuring "the quality of program outcomes," "the productivity of the program," "the overall essentiality of the program," and its potential as uncovered by an "opportunity analysis." As long as one speaks in generalities, this sounds fine. Who could deny that a university should support "quality" programs which offer a "productive" route to positive "opportunities"?

The problem is that it is not at all clear how general criteria of this sort should be translated into useful criteria that can be used to assess a particular university with a particular history in a particular locale. Inevitably, such attempts to translate from the general to the specific, in a way that makes sense for a particular university, generate debate which is frequently contentious. There is no simple and obvious way to turn generalities about quality, productivity, and opportunity into the concrete, easily quantifiable metrics which are needed to create what PPP is supposed to generate: measurements of the success of different programs that allow meaningful comparisons and accurate rankings.

In view of this, the attempt to apply PPP is not a simple process. To begin with, it requires an enormous effort to ensure that the criteria it applies are relevant to the local situation. Creating the appropriate metrics becomes a sensitive and consuming task for deans, department heads, senior administrators, managers, faculty members, Senators, and members of the Board of Governors who are directly involved in the PPP process.

And this is only one step. Assuming metrics can be established, the intricacies of applying them must then be addressed. In judging a particular program, especially in a time of budget crisis, costs are an obvious consideration. However, costs cannot be fairly considered apart from the revenues a program generates. So, PPP requires an analysis of the costs and revenues associated with every program. This is a useful exercise, but a complex one which raises many questions about the way that costs and revenues are measured. To take one example: how does one assign the revenues generated from individual students? Should they be credited to the faculty or department where the students have their majors, or to the faculties who host the courses that they take, or in what proportion to each?

Assuming that these kinds of details can be worked through, a university employing PPP must establish a bureaucracy to secure the necessary data, apply the different metrics to programs, calculate PPP scores, and rank programs. This requires the coordinated effort of many—an effort that inevitably diverts an institution's attention away from its core missions of teaching, research, and service.

And this is only the beginning of the costs that come with PPP. The most significant is the disruptive nature of the PPP exercise itself, which cannot be measured in dollars or time spent. The disruptive consequences are rooted in the attitudes of programs and departments, which see PPP for what it really is—a process designed to decide whether they are winners or losers in an ongoing battle for shrinking resources. With such high stakes and uncertain results (if the results were obvious ahead of time, there would be no reason for the exercise), PPP is an unsettling process for many programs and the people who work within them.

In the world of international business, one might compare the way PPP operates to the 'forced ranking' appraisal system once popularized by General Electric. It appraised employees; placed them into categories like 'top 20 per cent', 'middle 70 per cent', etc.; and then terminated the 'bottom 10 per cent.' The severity of the process has earned the forced ranking system the label 'rank and yank.' It is still in use in some corporations, but controversially. John Hollon of TLNT.com, described it as "an arbitrary, formula-heavy performance system that's obsessed with cutting people down instead of helping to build them up."

It is not hard to imagine the disruptive effects of rank and yank on the morale and well-being of individual employees. PPP is rank and yank at the program level. It exacerbates the morale issues in a university by pitting programs against one another. Some departments win because others lose. The whole point is to separate the winners from the losers, to separate the wheat from the chaff. In the process, PPP encourages a view of that tends to favour cutting programs as a way to deal with budget problems instead of considering other possibilities like reconceptualization, the identification of solvable problems, and re-organization.

There are situations outside of universities where rankings for scarce resources cannot be avoided. Triage is an obvious example. In a situation in which one does not have as many livers as patients in need of a liver transplant, one must find a way to rank the candidates to determine the greatest need. In situations in which this cannot be avoided, a standard must be used. For PPP, the problem is the perception of the metrics used, which are much more controversial and usually applied without any broad consensus on the question of whether they are appropriate or not.

Consider the metrics for research productivity. Many contrary metrics (focusing on publications, citations, 'impact,' ranked journal articles, etc.) have been proposed. The size of research grants is one simple measure popular with universities and governments. Certainly, this is a good indicator of success in research competitions. It has the additional advantage of being a relatively simple measure that is easily calculated—the dollars awarded are easy to count and compare. The simplicity of this approach, however, is a problem as much as it is an asset. It is too simple to equate research quality with research income. For one thing, the latter is a function, not merely of quality, but also of the cost of the research in question. Sampling the Arctic seas to catalogue the ways in which different species react to global warming is an expensive endeavour which requires large research grants. Solving a conundrum in pure mathematics may require little funding. This is not because the latter requires less talent or has less long-term impact, but because it requires little infrastructure, needing only the time required to allow a spectacular thinker to think through the problem.

And this is only the start of the questions that may be raised about the use of research grants as a measure of research productivity. Are all research dollars the same? Should a dollar from industry count as much as a dollar from a tri-council grant? What about the bulk of university-based research—which is funded, not by grants, but by the time tenured professors devote to research activities as part (typically understood to be 40 per cent) of their workload? Isn't it possible that research projects in this category might have a transformational, even revolutionary, impact on their disciplines (and the world)?

What does a simple tallying of research dollars say about the relative value of pure and applied research?
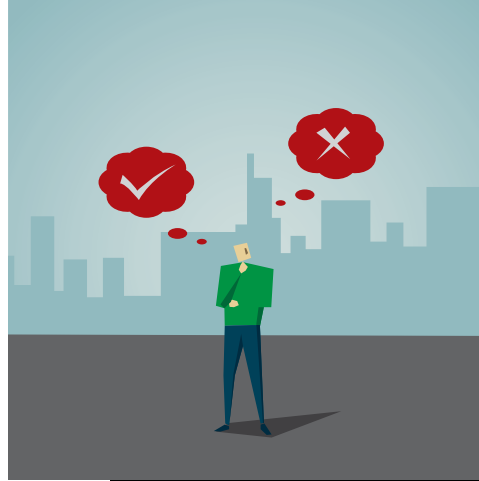
How does one apply such a metric to programs dedicated to creative writing, the dramatic arts, theology, or history? The real impact of research is not seen in the short term but in the long term, making attempts to assess impact—an attempt to predict the future—an inherently hazardous endeavour. Jorge E. Hirsch, the inventor of the h-factor, has conceded in a December 2009 issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* that "no bibliometric measure will do a good job picking up every novel, nonmainstream research until it becomes mainstream."

In any university, one can find influential professors whose work has not been supported by research grants. Between different kinds of programs, grant amounts vary enormously. Using these grants as a measure of research success is, in most universities, a constant source of debate and controversy. This is a familiar situation in university settings around the world. It is easier for administrations and administrators to recognize these complexities outside of a rigid process like PPP, which favours fixed comparators and a one size fits all set of metrics.

Despite these many questions, research productivity is one of the simplest issues raised by attempts to assess the value and success of a university's programs. Much more complex issues are raised by other measures that are typically used to judge a program's value—costs and revenues generated, student success, 'essentiality,' the opportunities for future development, contribution to the identity and success of an institution, and so on.

The challenges inherent in program metrics are compounded by the different directions in which the different metrics often point. Research productivity, however it is measured, may say one thing about a program; cost effectiveness, another; and the quality of undergraduate teaching yet another. When all is said and done, this may be inevitable; universities are eclectic places in which different programs have different goals, best measured by different constellations of metrics.

In light of all these complexities, and with so much riding on the outcome of PPP, it should come as no surprise that programs and departments tend to favour those metrics that place them higher in the rankings. This is a

> There is no way to rank, in an uncontroversial and unproblematic way, the myriad activities and programs contained within a university.

problem given that frameworks are usually established by committees in which influential committee members, or groups of committee members, may (even unintentionally) emphasize measures that favour the kinds of programs with which they are involved. As with all formulaic approaches to quality, clever departments will find ways of gaming the framework, so that their scores improve without substantive improvements in the quality of their programs. One worries that new initiatives that require radically new ways of thinking about teaching and research—just the kind of initiatives an institution may need at times of great flux and upheaval—are likely to be disadvantaged by metrics that are established by PPP committees composed of representatives from the traditional silos.

What PPP exercises are in need of is a set of metrics that can measure the value of a university's programs. There may be cases where this is possible, but in most cases it is difficult to compare different kinds of programs, especially as most PPP exercises rank academic and non-academic programs together. This raises thorny issues. Are the activities of a university's publishing house more or less valuable than intercollegiate athletics? How can one pick between an academic program with a long and celebrated tradition and one which aims to embrace the future? Is a large program with many students more or less valuable than a small program with elite admissions? Should an institution favour programs relevant to the local community over those that boast international renown?

The answer to such questions is that there is no answer. There is no way to rank, in an uncontroversial and unproblematic way, the myriad activities and programs contained within a university. In the case of academic programs, professors in each and every department are more than capable to justify what they do when asked.

In the worst cases, this is the reason why PPP tends to produce bitter suspicion, anger, and frustration rather than consensus. Rather than solve the thorny problems that it is supposed to address, all of the ambiguities and complications, and the insecurity and fear generated by PPP can

inspire widespread opposition to change, making crucial, unavoidable decisions more, rather than less, difficult to make. One does not make change easier by whipping a university into the kind of uproar that can break out as different programs fight with one another over their places in a PPP ranking.

Those who advocate for PPP may concede that it is difficult, but argue that universities have no choice but to pursue it resolutely to face the challenges that confront them today. Such arguments are a false dilemma. We are not in a situation in which one must do PPP or nothing. Thinking otherwise equivocates the need to make difficult decisions with the use of one particular methodology for doing so.

It must be said that some of the data PPP collects can be useful. In making difficult decisions about resources, it is important to know the cost of a program. The quality of research and teaching in a program is relevant in an attempt to assess it. But a university with a transparent budget does not need a PPP exercise to discover the costs and revenues associated with particular programs. A PPP ranking exercise is not needed to provide such data. In the case of academic programs, systems of review established at the provincial level already mandate the rigorous review of all programs, usually involving the input of external reviewers. A PPP exercise is not needed as an additional form of quality assurance.

We wonder whether something is amiss if heads, deans, directors and others do not already know where the weak programs are located in a university. That knowledge, combined with broader institutional strategic objectives, is the best basis for decisions about what to cut, consolidate, and complement. When more information is required to make decisions, this can be accomplished without the bureaucracy, the contention, and the cost that accompanies PPP. Our own experience suggests that changes are best accomplished in a nuanced way that attempts to address the particular rather than general issues for institutions, students, faculty and staff.

In the case of academic departments, it is hard to see what is to be gained by putting a department on trial when it has a superior research record, first-class teaching, bountiful enrolment, and a solid bottom line. In the case of departments on the other end of the spectrum, what is needed is not a ranking exercise (and the embarrassment, uncertainty, and frustration that accompanies it) but focused intervention to decide the best way forward.

Despite our skepticism, we cannot deny that the fiscal challenges at universities these days have made PPP almost *de rigueur.* Certainly the process has a great deal of allure for administrators and their universities. Often it is announced with much fanfare. We do not think that everything that PPP does is wrongheaded—honest and transparent data will always be the best prerequisite for good decision making. But we do not think a PPP exercise is needed to determine that a program is strong and deserving support, or weak and in need of cuts, reorganization, or some form of consolidation.

Instead of helping universities sort through the difficult decisions, many attempts at PPP seem to produce conflict and resistance to more productive ways of dealing with the difficult questions that universities simply cannot avoid. It makes it harder, not easier, to take on the serious challenges we face. AM

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Editorial Matters

Graeme Stewart

Havoc! Havoc! Smyt fast, give gode knocks!

BY ALL ACCOUNTS,
February 10, 1355 began quietly enough in Oxford. It was the feast day of St. Scholastica, who, despite what her name might suggest, is the patron saint of nuns and 'convulsive children.' The townsfolk went about their business, while the scholars of Oxford University attended to their studies. A normal day. But trouble was brewing inside the Swindlestock Tavern.

Students Walter Spryngeheuse and Roger de Chesterfield, unsatisfied with the quality of the house libations, argued with the tavern-keeper John Croidon. Harsh words were spoken. A drink was thrown in Croidon's face. The argument quickly became a brawl, and the violence spilled into the streets. The Mayor of Oxford demanded that the students be arrested, but the Chancellor of Oxford refused. Some 200 students rallied in support of Spryngeheuse and de Chesterfield, and attacked the Mayor and his officials. As news of the conflict spread, locals laid siege to the university, crying "Havoc! Havoc! Smyt fast, give gode knocks!" The riot lasted two days, and killed over 60 scholars and 30 townspeople. Good knocks, indeed.

After the violence had ended, and with the weight of Oxford's papal bull behind them, the students and scholars of Oxford were quick to humiliate their non-academic foes. The Mayor and Councillors were forced to march, heads uncovered, through town, and pay a fine of one penny for every scholar killed.

Amazingly, this annual ritual of penance continued for 470 years, until the Mayor finally put an end to it in 1825.

This is, of course, an extreme example of the antipathy between the civic authorities of the town and the academics of the gown. Modern-day disputes between academia and civic authority seldom break out into riots. Still, small vestiges of the St. Scholastica conflict remain. The town views the gown as aloof and haughty, as the stereotypical ivory tower. The scholars of the gown see the concerns of the town as distractions from the high-minded pursuit of knowledge. In many ways, town and gown remain two different worlds, with little common ground to connect them.

Perhaps these divisions are beginning to change. In this issue of Academic Matters, we've tried to highlight the connections that do exist between universities and their host communities. We also look at ways of strengthening the relationship between town and gown, in an effort to enrich both worlds.

George Fallis considers the question of what, exactly, makes a "civic" university, and how our modern institutions might better contribute to the vitality of our democracy. Mark Wexler considers what it means personally for academics to pay more attention to the needs of the town, and how this strategy of engagement may ultimately secure the university's survival. Kelley Castle outlines some innovative programs

that seek to connect students and community members, with surprising, occasionally uncomfortable, and deeply moving results.

Katherine Graham provides an introduction to community-based research in Canada, and explains how such research delivers real benefits to both scholars and communities. Similarly, Kathleen Bloom looks at a model that engages students with community groups that might otherwise lack the capacity for conducting in-depth research.

From the cultural angle, Mark Langer writes on the long history of town-and-gown depictions in film. From the earliest days of film, academia has been seen as world apart from the everyday reality of the town, and this portrayal has likely influenced how we understand the relationship today.

While the relationship between town and gown may not always be an easy one, our contributors have provided some intriguing ideas for bridging the gap between universities and communities. We've come a long way from riots in the streets of Oxford, but more work is need to maximize the reciprocal benefits that come when town and gown work together.

We close out the issue with an article that, while not about town and gown, offers some timely commentary on an important issue. Program prioritization is a controversial topic on campuses across Canada. Leo Groarke and Beverly Hamilton suggest that the very real downsides of this methodology far outweigh any potential benefits.

As always, we want to know what you think about Academic Matters. Leave a comment on our website, or feel free to get in touch at editor@academicmatters.ca. I'd also like to extend a special thanks to Associate Editor Erica Rayment for doing a lot of the heavy lifting on this issue.

Thanks for reading, and remember to keep checking academicmatters.ca for the latest blog posts and web exclusives. AM

Graeme Stewart is the Editor-in-Chief of Academic Matters, *Communications Manager for the OCUFA, and a PhD student at the University of Toronto.*

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