

# The Greater Expectations Gazette

Founded 2006

Today is Saturday, June 24, 2006. Today's temperature: Hi: 66 Lo: 52°



## Student Engagement and Educationally Effective Institutions

*Snowbird, UT* – Friday's morning plenary sessions kicked off a day of discussion about student engagement and what colleges and universities can do to transform themselves into what Institute faculty member George Kuh called "educationally effective institutions."

Kuh reported on data about student engagement from two national surveys he directs, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE). He started his talk by asking participants, "To what extent do your students engage in productive learning activities in and out of the classroom?" and "How do you know?" The extent that students participate in educationally purposeful activities, Kuh noted, directly relates to whether students will stay in college and engage in their learning. Such effective practices fall into several groupings:

- Level of academic challenge,
- Active and collaborative learning,
- Student-faculty interaction,
- Supportive campus environment, and
- Enriching educational experiences

Kuh also pointed to relatively new data on what he called the "compensatory effects" of student engagement. These data suggest that underrepresented minority students and students from low-income backgrounds make greater gains in measures such as GPA and retention with engagement in these activities. Kuh also contrasted several comparable items from the NSSE and FSSE, which show that faculty perceptions of the classroom experience can differ—at times quite markedly—from student perceptions.

He then moved into a discussion of several "high-performing institutions" that showed better-than-expected outcomes on student engagement graduation rates. He stressed to participants that there was "no one best model" but that all exhibited "combinations of complementary, synergistic conditions."

"Anything worth doing is worth doing well at scale," he said. "These institutions had more students involved more of the time in these types of practices." **See Student Engagement, over**



## From the Director...

Greetings! I'm keeping things brief to leave room for what I think interests you the most—your views and handy tips to help you move your project forward. I want to thank *everyone* who has jotted down a response to the various questions we have posed to you. Even if your quote is not listed here, it is very important to us and will help us think about our work at AAC&U in new ways. Don't forget the dessert mixer **tonight at 7:30** in the Atrium restaurant. Come have fun after your hard work!

*Alma R. Clayton-Pedersen*

Alma Clayton-Pedersen  
Director, Greater Expectations Institute

## The Student View

Yesterday at lunch, we asked students how engaging with diversity has enhanced their learning. Here is a sample of their responses.

"It's clear that the world is becoming increasingly dependent upon global cooperation and that true understanding of other cultures and viewpoints is absolutely necessary for what I would consider success. To close one's self entirely to the diverse lessons that one can learn from the experiences and wisdom of others is a very foolish way to look at the world and at life."  
Lauren Jackson, Chestnut Hill College

"I feel that diversity at the university has most impacted me by providing perspectives different than my own. By having a diverse community, there are members who can approach a problem differently than me and provide the answer where I may have been stuck." Ryan Collins, Penn State

"Being at an HBCU, the diversity on our campus breaks down to the different cultures from each region. Diversity has broadened my perspective on my own people, because even though I am Black myself, we as people often let stereotypes define who we are and how we see ourselves in society." Alonzo Walker III, Norfolk State University

"Although I attend an Historically Black University (HBCU), our student population is very diverse (i.e., backgrounds, cultures, etc.). It's a growing experience to learn with these students as well as learn about them." Justine Elyse Green, Norfolk State University

"One of the most important experiences we have encountered at Wells College is the Psychology Tutorial. It was a forum where ideas and experiences could be shared and respected. We found ourselves changing while facing controversial issues. Issues that discussed diversity." Megan Correia & Rachel Gaskill, Wells College

"New College's strength, in terms of diversity, comes from a diversity of ideas. The best courses are the ones in which you're questioning the assumptions that you make, every other minute." Marissa Krumm, New College of Florida

"The most important form of diversity to me, the type without which no other form really matters, is diversity of thought..." Travis Campbell, San Jose State University

- Amy Addams and Patty Alvarez

## Question of the Day

### What significant learning have you had so far?

"George Kuh's presentation was profoundly inspiring. He gave our team confidence in our belief that the initiative we started cannot remain a 'boutique' program." – Rajini Srikanth, UMass Boston

"I have learned that we are not unique in the challenges we face on our campus." – Jeremiah McCluney, KCK Community College

"Yesterday in our session with Lee, she told us to remember to build in time to rest and relax...at home as we present, share, expand and continue to develop our action plan! We all said, 'wow!' and then 'how?' She gave great examples." – Khadijah O. Miller, Norfolk State University

"We can use the 'gift' of what employers have told us they need as a lever to help students appreciate and value the very things espoused as important outcomes by the LEAP report." – Evelyn Patterson, USAF Academy

"Redefining excellence." – Diana Pace, GVSU

"That scale matters." – Greg Spaid, Kenyon College

"I've learned a great deal from my colleagues. At home we rarely have the time to hear each other's voices. Their insights, passion, and intellect are impressive." – Tim Ecklund, Buffalo State College

"How to calculate faculty workload and how to prioritize resources—Dee Fink provided a great model. Ways to think about/engage folks in a process for change—Damon W. was great." – Cecelia Cavanaugh, Chestnut Hill College

"The move from broader philosophical and theoretical discussions, such as those focusing on how we understand diversity or inclusive excellence, into practical applications useful for our institutional needs has been facilitated through both seminar and interest sessions." – David Beighley, Fairmont State University

"If we could practice reconciliation for those who have been edited out and remember what is good about our history, we would be able to move forward with a different kind of shared vision." – Wendy Wenner, GVSU

"Intentionality is key." – Paula Turner, Kenyon College

### Student Engagement, con't.

Following Kuh's presentation, student campus team members assembled into a "fishbowl" in order to talk among themselves prior to engaging with the larger audience. They were posed a series of questions, including "What was the most powerful learning experience you had while in college?"; "What advice do you have for teams about involving students in educational change?"; and "What challenges exist with regard to engaging students on campus, and what positive things are you seeing?" Several students said that their most memorable learning centered on an experiential learning opportunity, whether that involved Hurricane Katrina clean-up, devising a drug prevention campaign for junior high schools students, or completing a marketing and communications internship in a public health organization. Many also spoke of the value of their leadership opportunities in a variety of contexts. These positions and activities had personal benefits, such as increased self confidence and self discovery, as well as interpersonal benefits, such as empowering other students to become more active in their campus communities.

When it comes to advice for campus teams, students had positive things to say as well as some constructive criticism. "If faculty don't take [students] seriously, they're not taking themselves or their futures seriously," said Lauren Jackson of Chestnut Hill College. Several students stressed the importance of proactive interaction into students' lives, particularly those students who may not be as engaged. Gulat Shirdon of UMass Boston reminded the group of the importance of faculty accessibility, particularly for commuter students juggling work and school. "If I can't get a hold of you, it limits what we can do together in the future," he said. Travis Campbell of SJSU noted that faculty and staff must "more frequently ask students if things are working." Travis Shofner from the University of Idaho concurred. "Student initiative comes from faculty involvement" he said.

Here's a helpful tip from Judith Ramaley, Institute faculty member and President of Winona State University: "When people are afraid they will lose something if things change, point out what they will gain if things do change."

## Photo of the Day

*View above Alta*



### The Greater Expectations Gazette, Vol. 1, No. 4

#### Contributors

Amy Addams      Alma Clayton-Pedersen  
Patty Alvarez      Karen Kalla  
Misha Charles      Nancy O'Neill

## Resistance: Not Always the Enemy

I caught up with Lee Knepfkamp recently to hear her thoughts on resistance to change. She outlined six forms and urged campus leaders to "turn resistance into opportunity."

- 1. Fear of the unknown.** Colleagues may think the status quo is better because it is familiar—even if it's not working.
- 2. Loss of role or identity.** Change may cause colleagues to wonder if their past performance is being questioned or wonder what the consequences will be for them in the future.
- 3. General philosophical disagreement.** Colleagues' disagreement can be genuine and legitimate (e.g., "I don't think Gen Ed should be menu choices"), and these individuals can often be engaged at later points in the process.
- 4. Burn-out.** These colleagues may have been involved in previously underfunded or otherwise 'sabotaged' initiatives. These folks are not necessarily against your initiative.
- 5. Things work now.** These colleagues can argue, "We may not be perfect, but students seem to be doing pretty well."
- 6. Curmudgeons.** These colleagues will be forever against change, and we often spend too much time focusing on them.

Resistance can be a "source of incredibly important dialogue" that can result in change moving forward in many cases, Knepfkamp said. She noted that each of the six forms of resistance will require "very different conversations" to get at the source. With regard to action a team could undertake to dismantle resistance, Knepfkamp discussed "standing aside," a tenet of Quaker meetings where individuals set their opinions aside on behalf of the group. With this option, people who are not 100% "for" the project do not automatically become "against". She stressed that such resistors need to be understood by everyone, be included in processes, and have their concerns further discussed rather than played down. "After 32 years in this work, I'd say 90% of all resistors fit into categories 1-5 and have potential for movement," she said. "A lot of resistance is asking to be engaged."

- Nancy O'Neill