

At the 2006 Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) annual meeting,

Richard Florida, professor of public policy at George Mason University and author of *The Flight of the Creative Class*, articulated the cornerstone of his philosophy to a room filled to the brim with interested participants: “Every single human being is creative. The great challenge of our age,” he said, “is to tap and harness all of that creativity.” This call for recognizing and capitalizing on creative resources was issued not only at the AAC&U meeting, but concurrently at the 36th World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland. The Davos meeting, convened under the title “The Creative Imperative,” called for business, political, and civil society leaders to harness creativity to provide new answers to the world’s problems. In Davos, Mukesh Ambani, chairman and managing director of Reliance Industries in India and cochair of the 2006 World Economic Forum meeting, told attendees that “the world has a real chance if we form global partnerships to banish poverty, and we need creative solutions.”

This issue of *Peer Review* is titled “The Creativity Imperative” because the roles of creativity and innovation in undergraduate education are essential if we are to prepare students to succeed and make a difference in today’s world. The issue had its genesis over a year ago at the AAC&U annual meeting in San Francisco when I first met with Joe Trimmer, who directs the Virginia Ball Center for Creative Inquiry at Ball State University. Joe proposed that *Peer Review* would be an appropriate place to bring together a collection of articles that would highlight the role of creativity on the college campus. Joe was inspired by the article “The Creative Campus: Who’s No. 1?” written by Stephen Tepper (who is also an author in this issue), which was published in the October 1, 2004, issue of *The Chronicle for Higher Education*. In his *Chronicle* article, Tepper states, “Creativity thrives on those campuses where there is abundant cross-cultural exchange and a great deal of ‘border’ activity between disciplines, where collaborative work is commonplace, risk taking is rewarded, failure is expected, and the creative arts are pervasive and integrated into campus life.”

Joe became such a champion for publishing an issue of *Peer Review* on the theme of creativity that he volunteered the Virginia Ball Center’s support to sponsor the issue, and we welcomed him as a coeditor and author. He worked with the editors to develop an author list that would recognize the range of good work on creativity occurring on many campuses. We also invited authors from outside of the academy to share their points of view on how creativity and innovation will determine our students’ future in the workplace and the larger community. The call for fostering a creative workforce becomes particularly meaningful when paired with an article on the Davos meeting in the January 30, 2006, issue of *Newsweek* by Richard Florida. In that article, Florida reports that presently “more than 40 million Americans work in the creative economy, which has grown by 20 million jobs since the 1980s and accounts for more than \$2 trillion—nearly half—of all wages and salaries. Over the next decade, the U.S. economy will add some 10 million new creative-sector jobs, according to our calculations based on the latest Bureau of Labor Statistics forecasts.”

Attendees at the 2006 AAC&U annual meeting were given a preview of “The Creativity Imperative” issue when authors Joe Trimmer, Stephen Tepper, and Tori Smith-Haring presented their papers in a concurrent session called “The Creative Campus.” In the spirit of collaboration, those who attended the session were asked to submit words to the presenters that represent the key elements of creativity. As the session ended, a consensus was reached—the following words were chosen to reflect the arch of the creative process: *immerse, stretch, fail, improvise, collaborate, engage, integrate, persist, create, reflect, and transform*. These words, which are featured on the cover of this edition, represent the essential elements of creativity necessary to lift and propel students toward a future of unlimited possibilities.

—SHELLEY JOHNSON CAREY

To listen to the AAC&U Podcast feeds for “The Creative Campus” and “The Flight of the Creative Class,” from AAC&U’s 2006 Annual Meeting go to www.aacu.org/podcast.