Extant literature documents the current dynamic landscape of higher education with its myriad changes including demographic shifts, fluctuating fiscal models, pedagogical innovations, and technological approaches, to name a few (Dolgon, Mitchell, & Eatman, 2016; Eatman, 2012; A. J. Kezar, 2012; Lewis & Cantor, 2016; Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). Within the landscape of higher education, scholars are becoming increasingly more strategic and imaginative about ways to connect with, and pursue democratic purposes in, the larger society (Boyte, 2015; Coles, 2014; Sousanis, 2015). In this regard, many institutions of higher education throughout the country are exploring and embracing community engagement in its sundry forms and definitions. In fact, thought leaders in the academy point to the prevalence or Centrality of Engagement in Higher Education, actually the title of an important article by Fitzgerald, Bruns, Sonka, Furco, & Swanson (2012). Publicly engaged scholarship (PES) in particular, with its determined focus on a collaborative knowledge-making enterprise, is an increasingly important aspect of this landscape (Association of American Colleges & Universities, 2012; Eatman, 2012).

Faculty development is very important in this context; regardless of how it is defined and operationalized, it is a useful mechanism for equipping faculty with the necessary tools to navigate their work and to operate as knowledgeable and effective agents within the institutions they serve. One may argue that faculty development writ large is a critical aspect of strategic institution building in that it provides channels for faculty to be involved and contribute to the development of institutional vision, mission, values, and goals, beyond strengthening teaching, to policy, governance, strategic planning, and other aspects of institutional life. This is to say that the principle of agency lies at the core of faculty development. Institutional aspirations and vision can be fueled by strong administrative leadership but faculty represent the engine of amelioration. Faculty curate student learning experiences, prepare and socialize students for professional careers, and foster subsequent generations of faculty who take up the mantle. Perhaps, most importantly, they cultivate and pass along institutional memory. And for all the leadership that faculty provide and the information they share, I submit that we are at our best when we operate as co-learners and understand the power of such posture in our work. An exploration of this notion of faculty as co-learners is becoming more widely pursued within the academy.


DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Are you (and if so, in what ways are you) developing faculty at your institution not just as educators and researchers, but also as agents of institutional and community change?

How do/should/might you recognize and reward them for this work?