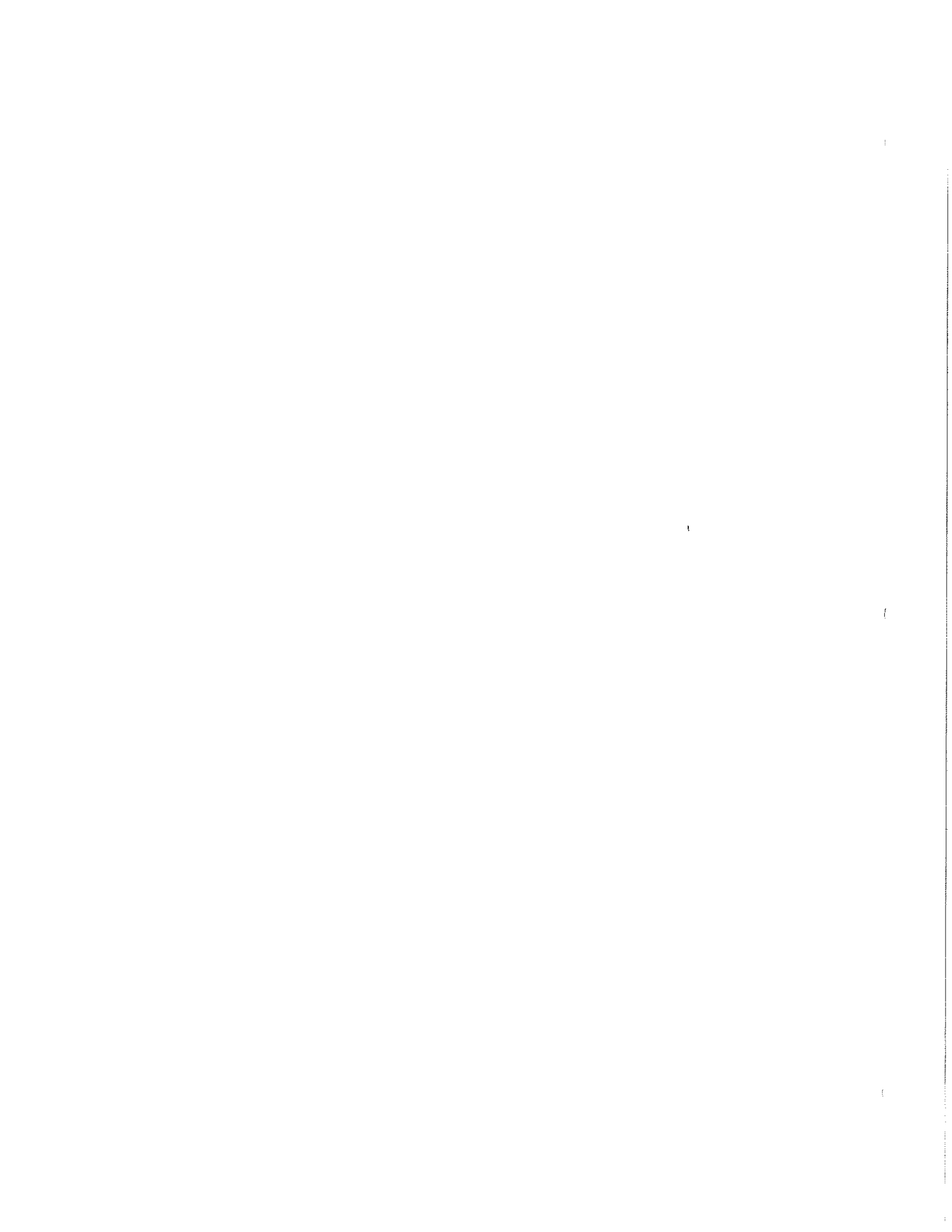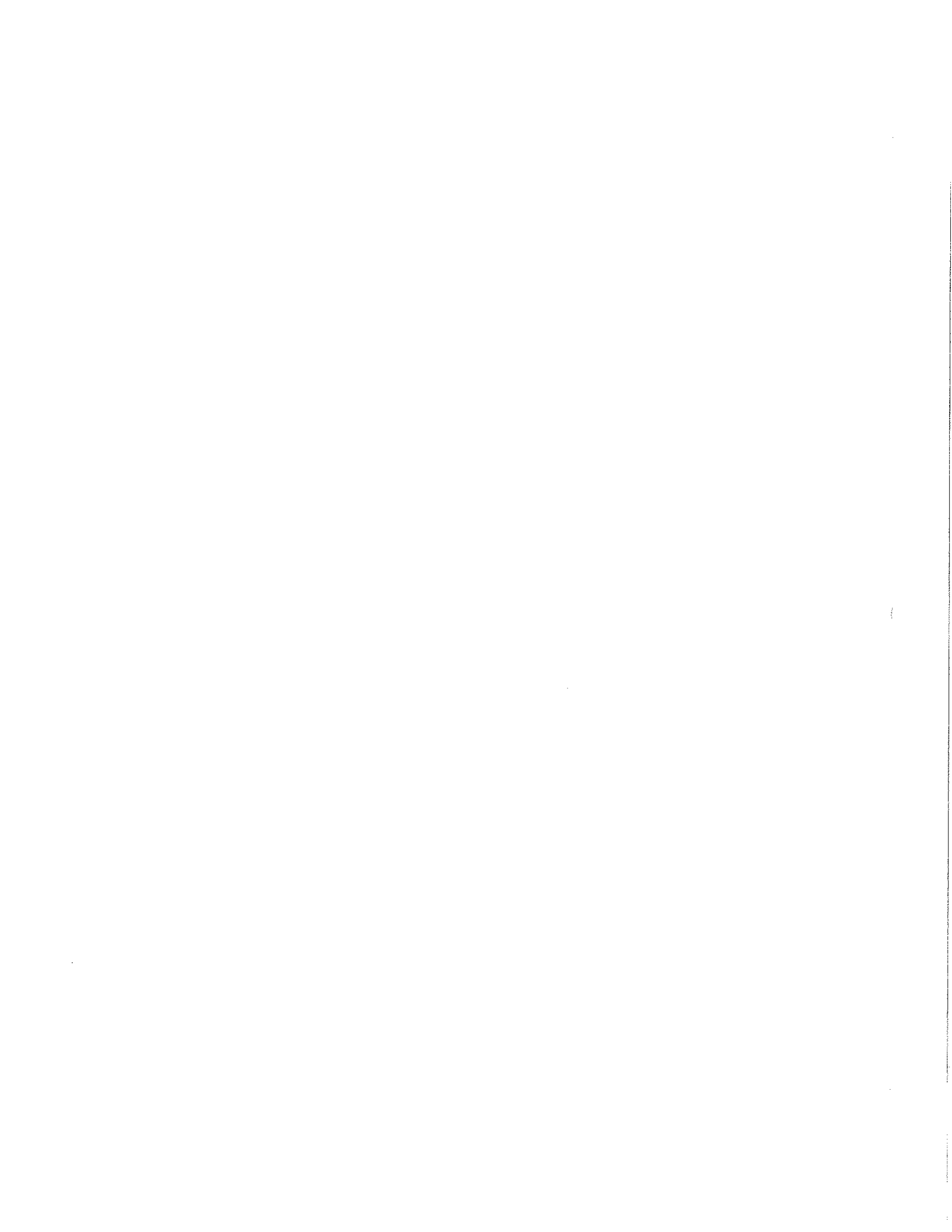# Barbara Leigh Smith, Ph.D.

**Emeritus Professor, Former Provost and Vice President
for Academic Affairs
The Evergreen State College, Olympia, Washington**

Nominated by

Steve Harmon Wilson, Ph.D.

Steven Harmon Wilson, Ph.D. (Juror)

Dr. Steven H. Wilson is Associate Dean of Liberal Arts at Tulsa Community College's Metro Campus. Previously, he was tenured Associate Professor of History at Prairie View A&M University in Texas. Wilson received his M.A. and Ph.D. in History from Rice University, where he focused on American legal and constitutional history. He also earned a B.S. in Electrical Engineering at Rice. Before becoming a historian, Dr. Wilson was employed at the National Security Agency (NSA) and at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). He is the author of *The Rise of Judicial Management in the U.S. District Court, Southern District of Texas, 1955–2000* (University of Georgia Press, 2003), and several articles on Mexican American civil rights, including: "Brown Over 'Other White': Mexican Americans' Legal Arguments and Litigation Strategy in Desegregation Litigation" (*Law & History Review*, vol. 21.1, March 2003), and "Some Are Born White, Some Achieve Whiteness, and Some Have Whiteness Thrust Upon Them: Mexican Americans and the Politics of Racial Classification in the Federal Judicial Bureaucracy" (in *"Colored Men and Hombres Aquí": Hernández v. Texas and the Emergence of Mexican American Lawyering*, M.A. Olivas, ed. (Arte Publico, 2006).

Barbara Leigh Smith, Ph.D. (Nominee)

Dr. Barbara Leigh Smith is emeritus professor, and former provost and vice president for academic affairs at The Evergreen State College, Olympia, WA.

Education: B.A., Political Science, Lawrence University, 1966; B.A., Sociology, Political Science, University of Leicester; M.A., Political Science, University of Oregon, 1968; Ph.D., Political Science, University of Oregon, 1970.

Nomination for Innovation in the Area of Learning Communities

Dr. Barbara Leigh Smith has been involved in the collaborative learning and service learning movements since the 1970s. In 1985, she became the founding director of the Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education at Evergreen State. The Washington Center began as a 51-college grass roots partnership for curricular reform and faculty development in the state of Washington. In the years since, Dr. Smith has consulted widely at two- and four-year colleges and universities in the areas of learning communities development and teaching, collaborative learning, student intellectual development, and assessment. In person or in print, Dr. Smith has inspired, encouraged, supported, or guided campus leaders throughout the nation interested in launching learning community initiatives.

From 2000-2004, Dr. Smith co-directed the National Learning Communities Project, a Pew Charitable Trusts-funded initiative aimed at strengthening learning community programs and communities of practice nationwide. Her work has shown how the creation of learning communities can be a flexible and effective approach to enhancing student learning, promoting curricular coherence, and revitalizing faculty.

Dr. Smith has written or collaborated on many articles and books, including: *Learning Communities: Reforming Undergraduate Education* (2004); *Strategies for Energizing Large Classes: From Small Groups to Learning Communities* (2000); and, *Learning Communities: Creating Connections among Students, Faculty and Disciplines* (1990).

The enclosed supporting materials include: (1) a PDF of the first chapter of *Learning Communities: Reforming Undergraduate Education* (2004); (2) an essay from the fall 2001 issue of *Peer Review* (the journal of the American Association of Colleges and Universities); and (3) the text of a keynote address delivered March 1, 2002, at the Southwest Regional Learning Communities Conference, Tempe, AZ.

BARBARA LEIGH SMITH

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CURRENT AND PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

2005 to date   Senior Scholar and Special Assistant, Enduring Legacies Reservation-Based Program, The Evergreen State College; Senior Advisor to the President, Bainbridge Graduate Institute

2004-2005   Senior Scholar, The Evergreen State College; Emeritus Provost and Faculty Member

2001 to 2004   Co-Director, National Learning Communities Project, Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education, The Evergreen State College.

1994 - 2001   Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost, The Evergreen State College.

1990 - 1994   Academic Dean and Director of the Washington Center for the Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education

1985-90   Senior Academic Dean and Director of the Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education
Senior Academic Dean, The Evergreen State College, Olympia, Washington 98505
     Principal responsibilities: Budget, Curriculum & Hiring (1978-1990)

1976-78   University of Nebraska; Centennial Education Program; Director (1977-1978); Teaching Fellow (1976-1977)

1972-78   University of Nebraska; Department of Political Science; Tenured 1975; Assistant Professor 1972-74; Associate Professor 1975; Vice Chair 1974-76

1970-72   Visiting Assistant Professor; Department of Government; Lawrence University

1967-70   Research Assistant, Center for Advanced Study of Educational Administration, University of Oregon

OTHER CURRENT PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS and RESPONSIBILITIES

Member of the Board of Directors, Bainbridge Graduate Institute, 2005 to date.

Evergreen co-coordinator, Consortium for Innovative Environments in Learning, 2005 to 2006

Syracuse University, Pathways Project advisory board

OTHER PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS and RESPONSIBILITIES

Service on more than a dozen reaccredidation teams and program reviews, Southern Association and Western Association of Schools and Colleges, 1994 to date.

Institute on the Future of Higher Education, Antioch University, 2001-2004

American Higher Education Association
Board of Directors, 1994-1998; Chair, 1996-97

Association for General and Liberal Studies
Board of Directors, 1987-1991; Conference Chair, 1991

Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education

Advisory Committee, National Center for Teaching, Learning and Assessment, Penn State.

Advisory Committee, Association of American College's Project on Strong Foundations for General Education, 1991.

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Ph.D. 1970, M.A. 1968 (Political Science), University of Oregon

B.A. 1966 (Political Science), Lawrence University

1964-65 (Sociology, Politics), University of Leicester, Leicester, England

Summer, 1982 Harvard University, Institute for Educational Management

HONORS

(with Jean MacGregor) Virginia B. Smith Innovative Leadership Award. 2003. Presented by CAEL and the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.

Certificate of Excellence, The Hesburgh Award for outstanding faculty development programs 1994. Presented to The Evergreen State College for the Washington Center.

Innovator's Award, Meiklejohn Education Foundation. 1994.

SELECTED GRANTS and AWARDS

Enduring Legacies Reservation Based Project, Lumina Foundation for Education, 2005-2008, $800,000.

(with Jean MacGregor) National Learning Community Project, 2000-2004. Pew Charitable Trusts.

American Council of Learned Societies; Conference of Interdisciplinary Education. $35,000. 1997.

Northwest Area Foundation. "Native Economic Development Arts Initiative." $325,148. 1996.

National Science Foundation. Interdisciplinary Science Faculty Development Project. $216,000. 1993.

With J. Butler, Co-PI. Ford Foundation Cultural Pluralism Challenge Grant. $75,000. 1993.

With J. Bayard and others. National Science Foundation. $300,000. 1993.

Project Director: Rob Cole. National Science Foundation Washington State Dissemination Project for Calculus. $225,000+. 1993.

Pew Charitable Trusts Initiative on Strengthening the First Two Years of College, The Evergreen Initiative for Strengthening Teaching and Learning. $90,000. 1992.

Security Pacific Bank. Washington Cultural Pluralism Project. $5000. 1992.

The Boeing Company. Washington Cultural Pluralism Project. $5000. 1992.

With J. Butler (Co-PI). Ford Foundation. Statewide Cultural Pluralism Curricular Transformation project. $718,000. 1992.

Project Director: Rob Cole. National Science Foundation Washington State Dissemination Project for Calculus. $225,000+. 1991.

Exxon Education Foundation to Support 1991 Association for General and Liberal Studies General Education Conference and Conference Proceedings. 1991.

State Board for Community College Education Contract for the Minority Student Success project. $15,000. 1990.

Burlington Northern Foundation grant to Washington Center for faculty exchange programs. $9,000. 1989.

Burlington Northern Foundation grant to Washington Center for faculty exchange. $22,500. 1987.

(With Patrick Hill. Ford Foundation Grant to the Washington Center for work on program development and faculty exchanges designed to increase coherence in the curriculum. $75,000. 1986.

Nominee and semi-finalist, Charles A. Dana Award for Outstanding Achievements in Higher Education. 1986.

Washington Center Cooperative High School Project, Matsushita Foundation. $42,000. 1986.

Title II, Math Education Teacher Project, Council for Postsecondary Education. $42,000. 1985.

Lassen Foundation for collaborative work with Thurston County high schools on faculty development. $3,000. 1985.

With Patrick Hill. EXXON Foundation, for the Washington Center for Undergraduate Education, emphasis on learning communities and faculty development. $50,000. 1985.

Northwest Area Foundation. "Cooperatives for Quality Education Program." $9,900. 1984.

Safeco Life Insurance. Grant to fund Health and Human Services Conference. $2,000. 1982.

Title XX Training Grant for Domestic Violence Training. $48,000. 1981.

With University of Washington, Pacific Lutheran University, University of Oregon, Lewis and Clark College and University of Puget Sound), National Endowment for the Humanities, Writing Across the Curriculum, Pacific NW Writing Consortium Three-year grant. $375,000. 1981.

Metropolitan Life Foundation grant for Alternative Education Conference. $10,000. 1981.

MAJOR CONFERENCES AND INSTITUTES SPONSORED

National Learning Community Conference, May 2004

Evergreen conference on Alternative Interdisciplinary Education. 1997.

Washington Center "Learning Community" Conference. 1997.

Washington Center Interdisciplinary Learning Communities in the Sciences Institutes I and II. 1994.

Washington Center Cultural Pluralism Institute. 1994.

Washington Center Reform Calculus Institute. 1994.

Washington Center "Collaborative Learning" Conference. 1993.

Washington Center Cultural Pluralism Institute. 1993.

Washington Center "Ourselves among Others" Conference. 1992.

Washington Center Cultural Pluralism Institute. 1992.

Washington Center Reform Calculus Institute. 1992.

Association for General & Liberal Studies "General Education: Rhetoric & Reality" Conference. 1991.

Washington Center "Ways of Knowing" Conference. 1989.

Washington Center "Involvement in Learning" Conference. 1989.

Washington Center "Collaborating to Improve Developmental Education" Conference. 1989.

Washington Center "Approaches to Assessment & Instruction: The Perry Scheme" Conference. 1989.

Washington Center "Collaborative Learning: Theory & Practice" Conference. 1988.

Washington Center "Writing & Thinking across the Disciplines" Conference. 1988.

PUBLICATIONS

Hardiman, Joye, Barbara Leigh Smith, Kim Washington and Ed Brewster, "How Community-Based Learning Communities Can Reach Students from Underrepresented Populations." Forthcoming in Learning Communities and Student Affairs: A Convergence Zone for Powerful Learning and Collaboration, 2007, The Washington Center for Improving the quality of Undergraduate Education, The Evergreen State College and NASPA, The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators. In Press

Smith, Barbara Leigh. "Effective ways to Promote Learning and Program Improvement," eWAG, May 2007.

Smith, Barbara Leigh, Kim Heller, Jeanette Blackburn, Stacey Gouley, Debbie Martin, Diana Palmer, "What Native Students Say about Learning through Cases." May 2007. Enduring Legacies Native Case website at www.evergreen.edu/tribal/cases

Stumpff, Linda Moon and Smith, Barbara Leigh. "Thinking about Cases: The Enduring Legacies Native Cases Initiative" published winter 2007 on the Enduring Legacies Native Case website at www.evergreen.edu/tribal/cases

Jenkins, Allen Standingbear and Smith, Barbara Leigh. "ePortfolios are about Learning," eWAG, May 2007.

With others, "Emerging Trends in Learning Community Development." Washington Center News, Winter 2006.

"What's New in the Learning Community Literature?" Washington Center News, Winter 2006.

With Jean MacGregor. "Where are Learning Communities Now? National Leaders Take Stock About Campus, Spring 2005.

With Jean MacGregor, Roberta Matthews and Faith Gabelnick, Learning Communities: Reforming Undergraduate Education. Jossey Bass, 2004.

Producer and script writer. Video. Learning Communities: Constancy and Change. Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education, The Evergreen State College, Olympia, WA, 2003.

With Al Guskin and Mary March, Learning Communities and Fiscal Reality: Optimizing Learning in a Time of Limited Resources. Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education, The Evergreen State College, Olympia, WA, 2003.

"Beyond the Revolving Door: Learning Communities and the First Two Years of College." Double the Numbers: Increasing Postsecondary Credentials for Underrepresented Youth. Harvard Education Press, 2004.

"Learning Communities and Liberal Education." Academe, January-February 2003.

Smith, B. L. "The Challenges of Learning Communities as a Growing National Movement." Peer Review. Association of American Colleges and Universities, November 2001.

Smith, Barbara Leigh and John McCann, eds. Re-inventing Ourselves: Interdisciplinary Education, Collaborative Learning and Experimentation in Higher Education. Bolton, MA: Anker Press, 2001.

"Evergreen at Twenty-five" in Reinventing Ourselves: Interdisciplinary Education, Collaborative Learning and Experimentation in Higher Education, editors: Smith and McCann. Bolton, MA: Anker Press, 2001.

"Learning Communities: Creating a Convergence Zone for Education Reform" in Reinventing Ourselves: Interdisciplinary Education, Collaborative Learning and Experimentation in Higher Education, editors: Smith and McCann. Bolton, MA: Anker Press, 2001.

Video producer/editor. Learning Community National Teleconference. University of South Carolina, Center for Freshman Year Experience, April 1999.

"Making the Bricks Into a House: Curricular Structures for Cumulative Learning" in J. Gardner and G. Van der Veer, The Senior Year Experience, Jossey-Bass, 1997.

With Roberta Matthews, J. MacGregor, and Faith Gabelnick. "Learning Communities: A Structure for Educational Coherence." Liberal Education, Summer 1996.

With J. MacGregor, R. Matthews, and F. Gabelnick. "Learning Communities" in Handbook of College Teaching, editors: J. Ratcliff and J. Gaff, Jossey-Bass, 1996.

With William Bergquist, K. Bergquist, J. Bergquist, and J. Tallman. Quality & Access: An Essential Union in American Higher Education, Jossey-Bass, 1995.

With Patricia Cuniff and Curtis Hieggelke. Putting the Pieces Together: A Guidebook for Leaders of Coalitions of Two- and Four-Year Colleges and Universities. Prince George's Community College, Largo, MD., 1995.

With Les Purce and Russell Lidman. "Good Practice Respects Diverse Talents," in Improving Undergraduate Education: The Seven Principles in Action. Anker Press, 1994.

"Team Teaching Methods" in Handbook of College Teaching, editors: K. Prichard and R. Mclaran Sawyer, Greenwood Press, 1994.

With Myrna Smith. "Revitalizing Senior Faculty through Statewide Initiatives." in Developing Senior Faculty as Teachers. Jossey-Bass, March 1994.

Co-producer and script writer (with Sally Cloninger). Multi-media performance. "Learning Communities: Creating Connections Among Students, Faculty and Disciplines." Presentation to Washington Center Annual Conference 1994.

With others. Washington Center Casebook on Collaborative Teaching and Learning. 1994.

"The Learning Community Model." in Current Issues in Liberal Education. Association of American Colleges, 1993.

"Creating Learning Communities." Liberal Education, Fall 1993.

"Cultural Pluralism in Washington: Work in Progress." Washington Center News, Fall 1993.

With Faith Gabelnick, Roberta Matthews and Jean MacGregor. "Learning Communities and General Education." Perspectives, Fall 1992.

Editor. Special Issue Perspectives. "General Education Revisited," Fall 1992.

With Jean MacGregor. "What is Collaborative Learning?" Collaborative Learning: A Sourcebook. National Center on Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, University Park, PA, 1992.

With Anne Goodsell, Michelle Maher, Vince Tinto, Jean MacGregor. Collaborative Learning: A Sourcebook. National Center on Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, University Park, PA, 1992.

With Jean MacGregor, "Reflective Interviews with Learning Community Teaching Teams: Strengthening Dialogue about Teaching and Learning." Washington Center News, Fall 1991.

"Taking Structure Seriously." Liberal Education, March/April 1991.

"Learning Communities thrive on Campus." In Context. Winter 1991. # 27.

With Robert Scott. "Liberal Arts College Counterpoint: What about the Publics?" AAHE Bulletin, December 1990.

With Rita Cooper. "Hiring for Diversity." AAHE Bulletin, October 1990.

With Faith Gabelnick, Jean MacGregor, Roberta Matthews. Learning Communities: Building Connections Among Disciplines, Students and Faculty, Jossey-Bass, Spring 1990.

With Rosetta Hunter. "Learning Communities: A Paradigm for Educational Revitalization," Community College Review, Spring, 1988.

"The Washington Center: A Grassroots Approach to Faculty Development and Curricular Reform," To Improve the Academy, October, 1988.

Co-editor. Washington Center News. 1986 to 1994.

Guest Editor. Writing in America's Colleges, American Association for Higher Education, March, 1984.

"The Writing Across the Curriculum Movement: An Interview with Elaine Maimon," in Writing in America's Colleges, American Association for Higher Education, Washington, DC, 1984.

With Richard Jones, editors, Against the Current: Reform and Experimentation in Higher Education Schenkman Press, 1984.

"The Artist in Residence Concept," Alternatives in Higher Education,. Fall, 1978.

With Karl F. Johnson, David W. Paulsen, Frances Shocket. Political Research Methods: Basic Foundations and Techniques, Houghton Mifflin. 1976.

With P. A. Shocket. "Regional Integration." Nebraska Department of Economic Development, 1975.

"Political Party as an Indicator of Educational Posture in Oregon," Educational Administration Quarterly, Fall, 1974.

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

Smith, Barbara Leigh. Teaching US History Project workshop on Enduring Legacies Native Cases Project, July 2007.

Smith, Barbara Leigh, Jenkins, Allen Standingbear, Hernandez, Alan. Native Cases. May 2007. Northwest Indian College. All faculty in-service

Aguilar-Wells, Michelle, Kim Heller and Barbara Leigh Smith. Using Native Cases in Mixed Classes. Washington Indian Education Assoc. April 2007

Smith, Barbara Leigh and Debbie Martin. Enduring Legacies Native Cases: Using Case Studies in the Classroom. Pacific Northwest Higher Education Teaching and Learning Conference, May 2007

Keynote Address, 'Learning Communities and the Long Road to Democratic Pluralism." Midwest Annual Learning Community Conference, Chicago, 2005.

"Emerging Trends in Learning Communities." Midwest Annual Learning Community Conference, Chicago, 2005.

Three sessions at The Institute on Quality Enhancement and Accreditation. Orlando, Florida, July 24-27, 2005. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Panel on "Creating an Environment to Promote Quality Enhancement: Case Studies/learning communities," Breakout sessions on the National Learning Community Project and Collaborative Learning.

"Learning Community Models and Core Practices." Johnson C. Smith University, 2005.

"The Reservation-Based Program's new Lower Division Partnership." Washington Community College Articulation Committee. 2005.

"Learning Communities: What are They? Why are They Important? Do They Work?" Learning Communities for STEM Academic Achievement Conference. Howard University, 2005.

Two plenaries: Why Learning Communities? Why Now?" and "Implementation Matters in Learning Community Development." Wayne State University, 2005.

"Dealing with the Future Now" Principles for Creating a Vital Campus in a Climate of limited Resources." John Carroll University, 2004.

"Dealing with the Future Now" Principles for Creating a Vital Campus in a Climate of limited Resources." Central Oregon Community College, 2004.

"Learning Communities and General Education," Central Washington University, 2004.

With others,"Taking the Lead: Postsecondary-Initiated Change through Learning Communities. Double The Numbers Conference on :Postsecondary Attainment and Underrepresented Youth. Washington D.C 2003.

"Making Choices about Sustainable Learning Community Models." National Learning Community Conference, Seattle, 2004.

With Jean MacGregor, "Financing Learning Communities," National Learning Community Conference, Seattle, 2004.

With Edwina Stoll, Cheryl Roberts, and Jayme Millsap Stone. Introduction to Learning Communities: Structures and Core Practices." National Learning Community Conference, Seattle, 2004.

Keynote address "Learning Communities and Re-forming Undergraduate Education," Western Association of Schools and College, 2003

"Financing Learning Communities in a Time of Limited Resources." Midwest Annual Learning Community Conference, Kansas City, 2004.

"Accountability." Presentation at Douglas College, Vancouver, British Columbia. 1999.

Speech on Learning Communities and workshop: "Implementing Learning Communities," moderator of Student Panel on Learning Communities, Richland College, Denton, Texas. 1999.

"Future Trends in Higher Education, " Miyasaki University, Japan. 1999.

With Roberta Matthews. Workshop on Introduction to Learning Communities. Washington Center Conference, Seattle. 1999.

"Transforming Campuses Through Learning Communities," Closing Plenary. Washington Center Conference, Seattle. 1999.

Panelist, Learning Community National Teleconference. University of South Carolina. Center for Freshmen Year Experience. 1999.

With Jodi Levine, Will Koolsberger, and Phyllis Van Slyck. Workshop on "Taking Structure Seriously: Using Learning Communities to Transform Institutions." American Association for Higher Education. Atlanta, Georgia. 1998.

With Vincent Tinto. "Learning Communities: Creating Connections Among Students, Faculty and Disciplines." Plenary address to the American Association for Higher Education Annual Conference on "Taking Learning Seriously." Atlanta, Georgia. 1998.

"Why Learning Communities: A Beginners workshop." Presentation to the Washington Center Conference on "Embracing Community, Diversity and Change." Seattle, WA. 1998.

"Implementing Learning Communities: Issues and Strategies." Presentation at the Conference on "Transforming Campuses into Learning Communities." University of Miami, Coral Gables, FL. 1998.

With Debra Friedman. "Using Portfolios to Change Administrative Culture in Service of Teaching, Collaboration and Reflective Practice." Presentation at the American Association for Higher Education Annual Conference on "Faculty Roles and Rewards." Orlando, FL. 1998.

"Learning Communities at the University of Central Florida: Issues and Solutions." Presentation at the University of Central FL. 1998.

With Don Yaeger and Louis Fox. "New Approaches to Statewide Articulation." WICHE Policy Forum on Fostering Postsecondary Success, Seattle, WA. 1997.

With Ed Dolan "Learning Community Implementation" and "Institutional Change Work." Sessions at the Washington Center FIPSE Learning Communities Institute. 1997.

"Renewing the Academy through Learning Communities." Keynote at the University of Louisville, KY. 1997.

"Life Long Learning: Prior Learning Conference," The Evergreen State College. 1997.

"Life Long Learning: Cliche or Emerging Paradigm for the 21st Century." Miyazaki University. 1997.

With Carver Gayton. "Transforming an Institution for Diversity." Ford Foundation Conference on Diversity Education and the Public Good. 1996.

With Faith Gabelnick. "Learning Communities." Workshop at the annual meeting of the American Association for Higher Education, Chicago, IL. 1996.

With Jane Jervis, Jim Crowfoot, and Penina Glazier. "Crossing Boundaries: Lessons From Alternative Colleges." Presentation to the annual meeting of the American Association for Higher Education, Chicago, IL. 1996.

"The Campus Environment: Keys to Faculty Hiring and Retention." Baruch College, The City University of New York's "Achieving a Diversity Faculty: Lessons from Around the Country conference," New York, NY. 1996.

With Dwight Oberholtzer. "Putting Learning First." Queens University, Kingston, Canada. 1996.

With Marie Eaton. "Teaching Portfolios." Washington State Assessment Conference, Central Washington University, Ellensburg, WA. 1995.

"Learning Communities: Current History and Future Prospects."" Closing address, Mieklejohn Education Association, University of WI. 1995.

With Gilda Sheppard. All-day workshop on Learning Communities for public colleges in the state of Mississippi, Mississippi State Institutions of Higher Learning. 1995.

With Kitty Parker, Steve Hunter and Sherry Walton. "Improving Freshmen Retention: Deep Dilemmas and Interventions." Annual statewide assessment conference. Spokane, WA. 1995.

"Creating Learning Communities." Plenary Address to the Freshman Year Conference, South Carolina. 1995.

"Collaborative Learning and Learning Communities." Workshop for the Freshman Year Conference, South Carolina. 1995.

With Faith Gabelnick. "Collaborative Learning and Learning Communities: Viable Ways for Building an Engaged Campus." Workshop at the Annual Meeting of the American Association for Higher Education. 1995.

"Developing Communities of Learning Across Disciplines." Presentation to the Fourth Annual Spring Conference of the Lilly Fellows Program in the Humanities and Arts. Texas Wesleyan University, Fort Worth, TX. 1995.

"Creating Learning Communities." Plenary Address to the National Academic Advisors Annual Meeting. 1995.

"No Longer Elective: Organizing Collaborative Learning Throughout the Curriculum." Presentation to the Annual Meeting of the Association of American Colleges and Universities. 1995.

With Cedric Page. "Strategic Planning and Diversity." Workshop for the Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education Annual Conference. 1995.

With Betty Schmitz. "Washington Center/University of Washington Cultural Pluralism Initiative: Overview and Lesson." Presentation for the Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education Annual Conference. 1995.

With Rosetta Hunter, George Freeman, Jr., and Gilda Sheppard. "Hiring and Retaining a Diverse Faculty." Presentation for the Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education Annual Conference. 1995.

"Collaborative Learning and Learning Communities." Presentation to the faculty at Willamette University. 1995.

"Institutional Change: Key Elements and Challenges." A workshop for the Ford Foundation's Fifth Annual Diversity Conference, Philadelphia, PA. 1995.

With Paul Lehto. "Hiring a Diverse Faculty." Association of American Colleges & Universities' Conference on "Transforming the curriculum: Incorporating Race & Gender." Seattle, WA. 1995.

With Pat Hutchings and Gillies Malnarich. "Learning Communities, Collaborative Learning & Reflective Practice," and "Using the Teaching Portfolio to Prompt Reflective Practice." American Association for Higher Education Conference "Improving Teaching Through Reflective Practice." 1995.

With Suzanne Benally. "Diversity, Unity, and Cultural Pluralism." Presentation to the annual meeting of The Association. Portland, OR. 1994.

With Ed Reynolds and Dwight Oberholtzer. "Using Cases to Explore Collaborative Teaching and Learning." Workshop for the Conference on Reflective Practice. 1994.

"Collaborative Learning." Presentation to the University of Houston Core Curriculum Institute. 1994.

With Jean MacGregor. "Building the Movement for Collaborative Learning: What it Takes." Presentation to the national conference on Collaborative Learning. Penn State University. 1994.

With Jean MacGregor. "Collaborative Learning and Learning Communities." Presentation to the National Conference on Collaborative Learning. Penn State University. 1994.

With Rochelle dela Cruz. "Exploring Issues in Cultural Pluralism through Cases." Workshop for the Annual Conference on Race and Ethnicity in American Higher Education. 1994.

With Cederic Page. "Comprehensive Approaches to Institutional Change." Workshop for the Annual
Conference on Race and Ethnicity in American Higher Education. 1994.

Three workshops on Teaching Portfolios, The Evergreen State College, and Case Studies. Presentation
to the faculty of Douglas College. 1994.

"Learning Communities." Lecture and workshop for the annual conference of the Meiklejohn Education
Association. 1994.

With Rosetta Hunter. "Learning Communities: A Viable Approach for Reshaping the Academic
Workplace for the 21st Century." American Association for Higher Education Annual Meeting.
1994.

With Rosetta Hunter. "Using Case Studies to Explore Diversity." Conference on "Equity within the
Classroom." Lansing, MI. 1994.

"Successful Approaches to Diversity." Conference on "Equity within the Classroom." Lansing, MI. 1994

With others. "Administrative Challenges in Learning Communities." Washington Center Learning
Communities Conference. 1994.

With others. "Funding Issues for Learning Communities." Washington Center Learning Communities
Conference. 1994.

"Innovating the Curriculum." Presentation to North Seattle Community College. 1993.

"The Dean as Instructional Leader." Presentation to Council of Independent Colleges Annual Meeting.
1993.

"Collaboration through Case Studies." Workshop for the Council of Independent Colleges Annual
Meeting. 1993.

Co-chair and presenter at National Science Foundation Conference on Coalitions. 1993.

With S. Benally, David Linder, and Robert Steele." Diversity Networks: Access, Equity and Excellence."
Annual Conference of Ford Foundation Diversity Initiatives. 1993.

With C. Maldonado, Rick Olguin, and J. Butler. "The University of Washington/Washington Center
Cultural Pluralism Project." Annual Conference of Ford Foundation Diversity Initiatives. 1993.

Convocation Address. "New Directions in Teaching and Learning." Clark College. 1993.

With Ed Reynolds. "Case Studies." Presentation at in-service day Spokane Community Colleges. 1993.

Seminar series on "Learning Communities & Collaborative Learning." Faculty College. University of
Wisconsin System. 1993.

"The Benefits of the Washington Center Consortium to Colleges and Universities in Washington." Texas
Tech University. 1993.

"Hiring for Diversity." Presentation to the University of Puget Sound Diversity Committee. 1993.

"Implementation in Learning Communities: What to Look out for" and "What are Learning Communities: Temple's Plan in National Perspective." Temple University, Philadelphia, PA. 1993.

With Paul Killpatrick. "What Promotes & Undermines Quality & Diversity: Washington State's Experience Promoting Diversity & Pluralism." National Institute on Quality Strategies in Higher Education. 1993.

With Ron Hamberg. "Holistic Strategies to Build Quality & Innovation in Higher Education: The Washington Center." National Institute on Quality Strategies in Higher Education. 1993.

With Edgar Beckham and Trevor Chandler, "The Changing Face of Diversity on Campus." American Association for Higher Education. 1993.

With Carl Waluconis, Dwight Oberholtzer, and Jean MacGregor. "Case Studies to Improve Collaborative Learning." American Association for Higher Education. 1993.

"The Washington Center." Kansas City Regional Council for Higher Education. 1993.

With Carlos Maldonado. "The Washington Center Cultural Pluralism Project." Annual Student Success Conference. 1993.

With James Harnish. "Rethinking Structures: Practical Steps for Starting Learning Communities." Annual Meeting of the Association of American Colleges. 1993.

With Elaine Maimon, George Kuh and Shirley Strum-Kenny. "Intellectual Community and the Commuter Campus: Models for Needed Practice." Invitational Symposium on General Education. 1993.

"What Matters in College: Engagement and Learning." Sponsored by the Association of American Colleges with support from the Exxon Education Foundation. 1993.

"Learning Communities and Active Learning." University of Hawaii. 1992.

"Cases and Collaborative Learning" and "Learning Communities" at the Joint Meeting of ISETA and Cooperative Learning Network. San Pedro, CA. 1992.

"Teaching and Learning Innovation in Washington." The Association. Port Ludlow, WA. 1992.

"Keeping Faculty Fresh: Opportunities for Renewal." 1992 Seminar in Community and Technical College Education. Ellensburg, WA. 1992.

Institute faculty with presentations on learning communities and assessment to the Asheville Institute on General Education. 1992.

"Gleanings: Report from a Washington Statewide Initiative to Enhance 'Minority Student Success.'" Presentation to the 78th Annual Meeting of the Association of American Colleges. 1992.

"Practical Utopias: Models and Principles for Improving Undergraduate Education." Presentation at the University of Utah. 1992.

With Rosetta Hunter and Rochelle dela Cruz. "Learning Communities: Collaboration for Innovation."

Presentation to the Expanding Leadership Diversity in Community Colleges Kellogg Fellows Conference. 1991.

With Linda Flory Barnes and Rick Page. "The Washington Minority Student Success Project: Lessons from a Change Model that Works." National Conference on Racial and Ethnic Relations. San Antonio, Texas. 1991.

"Assessment that is Real, Fun, and Stimulating: Washington State's Grass Roots Approach." American Association for Higher Education Assessment Conference. San Francisco, CA. 1991.

With others. "Voices of the Faculty: A Readers' Theatre Presentation." Washington Community College Humanities Association, Olympia, WA. 1991.

"Big Strides, No Dollars: How Washington College are Embracing Educational Change." Oregon Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers. 1991.

"Learning Communities: The Modern Legacy of Alexander Meiklejohn." Presentation to the Meiklejohn Education Foundation Annual Conference. 1991.

With Elizabeth Diffendal. "Learning Communities." State University of New York- Potsdam. 1991.

With others. "Avenues to Campus Dialogue around Teaching: Successful Precedents from Across the Nation." American Association for Higher Education. March 1991.

With Rita Cooper. "Successful Strategies for Hiring and Retaining a Diverse Faculty." Big Bend Community College. March, 1991.

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Convener of Poster Session on "Small Steps, Big Strides: Curricular Models that Work." Ourselves Among Others: Diversity and Community in America's College. February 1990. Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education Conference.

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With others. "Program Diversity in Washington." Presentation to Washington Trustees of Community Colleges Annual Conference. 1990.

"Learning Communities and General Education." Keynote address at the "Core Curriculum: Making the Connections"Conference, Houston, TX. 1990.

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With Roberta Matthews. "Learning Communities." The David Lawrence Memorial Lecture, California State University, Los Angeles, CA. 1988.

With Nancy Koppelman. "Student Centered Learning: The View from Evergreen." Western Washington University Conference on Student Centered Learning. 1988.

"Learning Communities: A Workshop." American Association for Higher Education Annual Meeting. 1988.

With Jean MacGregor. "Learning Communities as Curricular Models for Collaboration." University of Minnesota Honors Retreat. 1987.

"General Education Reform in Washington State." Washington NEA Issues in Higher Education Annual Meeting. 1988.

"Collegial Collaboration for Quality Staff Development." National Staff Development Council Annual Conference, Seattle, WA. 1987.

"New Perspectives on Teaching and Learning." Keynote address to annual meeting of the National Collegiate Honors Council, Dallas, TX. 1987.

"Perspectives on American Higher Education: The Evergreen State College as a Response to the Reform Movement." Miyazaki University, Japan. 1987.

"Building Academic Communities that Take Teaching Seriously." Session on Faculty Acculturation at Annual Meeting of the American Association for Higher Education. 1987.

"Taking Educational Quality Seriously: The Evergreen State College." Presentation to state community college counselors. 1987.

"The Washington Center." Presentation to the faculty at Shoreline Community College. 1987.

"Inter-Institutional Pathways for Increasing Curricular Coherence: The Washington Center Experience."Co-presenter at annual meeting of the Association for General and Liberal Studies. 1986

AApproaches to Assessment that Improve Teaching and Learning." Washington Center Seminar on Assessment, Seattle Central Community College. 1986.

"The Washington Center Approach to Educational Improvement." Presentation to State Board for Community College Education. 1986.

"The Washington Center as an Approach to Institutional Change." Presentation at Lower Columbia College. 1986.

"The Role of the Washington Center in Undergraduate Educational Reform." Conference on Active Approaches to Learning, Washington Center. 1986.

"The Washington Center: A State Model for Reform." American Association for Higher Education, Washington, DC. 1986.

"The Washington Center as a Statewide Strategy for Educational Improvement." Washington Center Conference on Learning Communities. 1985.

"Writing in Core Programs." Presentation at Conference on the Teaching of Writing, Intercollege Relations Commission, University of Washington. 1985.

"The Concept of Connecting Courses Across the Curriculum: The Coordinated Studies Approach." Faculty Development Institute, Seattle Central Community College. 1985.

Panel on "Successful Community College-Four Year College Articulation Programs." Articulation Conference, Seattle, WA, sponsored by The College Board and others. 1985.

Panel on "Model Interdisciplinary Programs: Evergreen and Seattle Central Community College Collaborate." Western Community College Humanities Association annual meeting, Seattle, WA. 1985

Panel on Interdisciplinary Studies. Washington Community College Humanities Association, Bellevue, WA. 1985.

"How Administrators Can Support Writing Across the Curriculum." Third annual conference of the Pacific Northwest Writing Consortium, University of Washington, Seattle, WA. 1984.

Panel on "Writing, Reasoning and Active Citizenship." Annual meeting of the Association for General and Liberal Studies/Integrated Studies Association, San Francisco, CA. 1984.

Panel on "How Writing Across the Curriculum Methods Can Inform Teaching Critical Reasoning." Sonoma State University Conference on Critical Thinking and Educational Reform. 1984.

Discussant. Panel on "Prophesy and Profits: The Decade of the 80's." CASE Conference. 1984.

"Strategic Faculty Development for General Education." Paper presented at the Association for General

and Liberal Studies annual meeting. 1983.

Session Moderator. "Beyond the Term Paper." Second Annual Writing Across the Curriculum Conference, Pacific Northwest Writing Consortium, Lewis & Clark College. 1983.

"Hi Tech and the Liberal Arts." Paper presented at the World Future Society's Conference on High Technology and Education, Seattle Center. 1983

"Writing Across the Curriculum and Its Organizational Context." Paper presented to the Annual Meeting of American Association of Higher Education, Washington, DC. 1983.

"General Education at Evergreen." Conference on General Education: "The Two- and Four-Year College Perspective." Central Washington University. 1982.

PART ONE

THE CONTEMPORARY AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF LEARNING COMMUNITIES
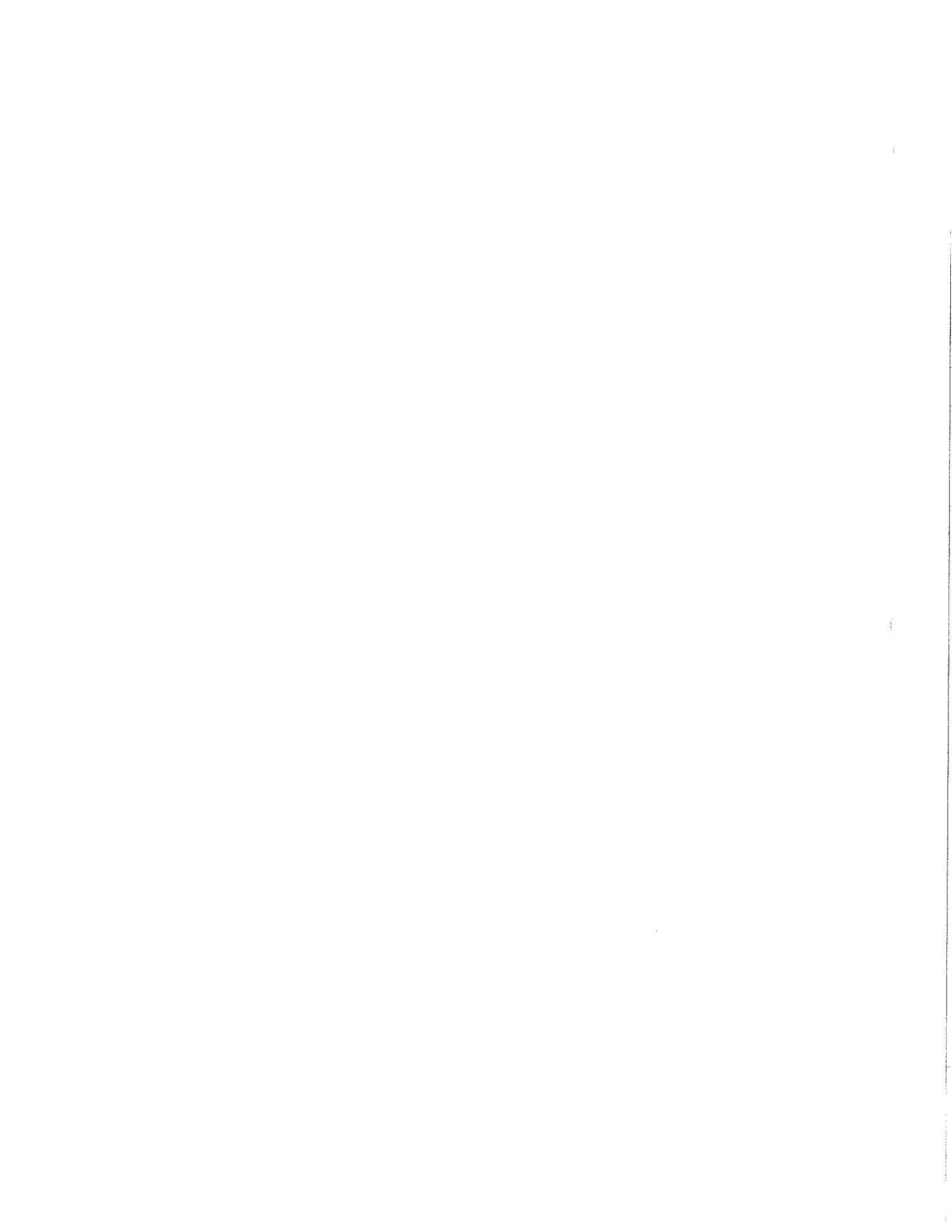
LEARNING COMMUNITIES AND UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION REFORM

Vital and successful institutions stand out by their ability to maintain direction and a sense of meaning even amid significant shifts in the social landscape. . . . Now, however, as major economic and social change shakes American society, higher education is facing serious tests of its resourcefulness.

—William M. Sullivan

WE STAND AT AN IMPORTANT JUNCTURE in higher education, a time that calls for new levels of resourcefulness in thinking about undergraduate education and the relationships between the academy and its communities. We know more about what promotes student learning than ever before, but we still face considerable challenges in putting what we know into practice. Our students are increasingly diverse and the ways they attend college have changed dramatically in the last thirty years. The bucolic vision of students attending residential colleges has faded as more and more students commute, often attending two or three different institutions during the postsecondary experience. Many simultaneously hold full-time or part-time jobs and have family obligations. They step in and out of our institutions, combining a community college program with on-line courses and a residential experience. At the same time, a college education is becoming increasingly important, as our society's expectations for student performance rise and the emphasis grows on the new

skills and abilities everyone needs to navigate and succeed in a changing, multicultural world.

Current faculty members, both those who led and those who resisted curricular change for the past twenty-five years, are retiring, offering an unprecedented opportunity to change the face and philosophy of the professoriate. Still, we know that new faculty are being educated in ways similar to their predecessors. Although there has been some progress in shifting the priorities and rewards to teaching, recent studies suggest that research remains a dominant force in the faculty culture. The nature of academic appointments is also changing, raising a host of questions about the implications for undergraduate education and the nature of community on our campuses. The issues of faculty succession and faculty work life thus become linked with educational reform.

We also find ourselves facing enormous political and financial challenges. Many of the publications cited in this chapter point to a financial crisis in higher education. Administrators spend too much time managing declining resources and trying to figure out ways to sustain their institutions. Our society is verging on an economy that requires nearly universal college attendance, while at the same time the prospective student population is the most diverse in our history. Jane Wellman's monograph *Weathering the Double Whammy* (2003) describes a broad fiscal crisis combined with a minority and immigrant student population that will require larger amounts of financial aid. Thus, access and affordability, hallmark challenges in the late twentieth century, continue to press higher education's social commitment to a better educated society in the twenty-first century. We are being asked to do more with less, to find more effective and less costly ways to improve student learning.

In response to these challenges, learning communities have arisen as one of many reform efforts in undergraduate education. Now offered at more than five hundred colleges and universities, learning communities have become a far-reaching and ambitious movement. Learning communities restructure the curriculum by linking or clustering two or more courses and enrolling a common cohort of students. We believe they are one of the most powerful interventions on the educational landscape because they provide a comprehensive, cost-effective framework for enhancing student learning that is applicable in many different types of institutions. Furthermore, a growing body of research demonstrates their effectiveness in addressing a variety of issues, from student retention to curricular coherence to faculty revitalization. Learning communities have much in common with many other reform efforts in their aspirations for and assumptions about what promotes student learning. Indeed, they

provide a structural platform for integrating many of these other reform efforts, such as service learning, collaborative learning, and various inquiry-based approaches to learning.

In this chapter we explore the higher education landscape and the challenges that the academy now faces. This discussion is essential to understanding why higher education is at such an important juncture. We then turn to recent calls for reform that, as we shall see, make increasingly convergent recommendations. Taking on change in a time of limited resources is difficult but necessary. Clearly, we need ways to learn to do our work better and more effectively, to help students become better learners. The chapter concludes by explaining how reforming undergraduate education through learning communities has emerged as one way of accomplishing this.

Challenges to the Academy

New Colleges, New Students, New Challenges

In the last four decades higher education in the United States has been transformed through a dramatic increase in the number and types of colleges and universities and a corresponding increase in student enrollment. The expansion of the higher education system has created unprecedented opportunities for place-bound students. Enrollment in two-year colleges went from fewer than half a million in 1960 to four million in 1980 (Kerr, 1990). Half of all students in the United States today spend their freshman year in a community college. At the same time, institutions of all types have become more comprehensive and wide-ranging in their curricular offerings. Although state-supported colleges and universities educate a growing proportion of all students, new types of institutions have also appeared. Nontraditional progressive colleges, for-profit colleges and universities, and institutions that use technology as their primary mode of instruction have emerged. In addition, many existing colleges and universities have reexamined their missions. In America's research universities, where one-third of all undergraduates earn their baccalaureate degree, undergraduate education has clearly become a greater priority although the reach of the reform efforts falls well short of our aspirations (*Reinventing Undergraduate Education*, 2001; O'Connor and others, 2003). Many other four-year colleges and universities have crafted new mission statements. The result has been the identification of new sectors in higher education—from "the urban university" to "the new American college" to "the public liberal arts college" (Spear and others, 2003).

As higher education has expanded, the student body has become much larger and more diverse in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, and cultural background (Marcy, 2002; Newton, 2000). Now only 16 percent of the student population may be described as "traditional"—that is, ages eighteen to twenty-two, attending college full-time, and living on campus. Many now attend college part-time. More than 70 percent work, and 41 percent are over age twenty-five (Marcy, 2002). Many of these new students are the first generation in their family to attend college. The majority of the new students are women.

Patterns of college attendance have also changed. Largely commuter institutions have become a pervasive force in higher education, raising pressing issues about how to create a meaningful academic community in a nonresidential, transitory setting. Even more problematic when it comes to maintaining academic community and coherence is the precipitous decline in the number of students who attend only one college for all four years. Few students now graduate from the institution at which they began their college career.

The fates of the two-year and four-year colleges have become intertwined, and issues of transfer and interinstitutional articulation are increasingly important. To complicate matters further, recent studies show that students do not flow logically from high school to college or from two-year to four-year institutions (Ewell, 2002c; Adelman, 1999). In fact, there is substantial lateral movement across four-year institutions and considerable reverse transfer between two-year and four-year schools. Meanwhile, relationships between colleges and high schools have become increasingly complicated. Widespread reform efforts in primary and secondary education are aiming for higher levels of student achievement, and a number of "early college" efforts are demonstrating ways to integrate the high school and college experiences and increase college attainment rates (Hoffman, 2003). At the same time, expectations for students are rising as our society becomes increasingly dependent on the kinds of knowledge and skill that are gained through higher education. In fact, the Association of American Colleges and Universities asserts that we are verging on universal college attendance as a college degree becomes the equivalent of a high school education one hundred years ago (*Greater Expectations*, 2002).

The challenges of educating a new generation of learners become apparent when we tackle the issues of student preparation and achievement, the mismatch between student and faculty expectations, and the differences between what colleges think is important and what parents and employers want. Although American higher education is often said to be the envy of

the world, the level of student achievement and preparation needs to improve. Many statistics indicate this to be the case:

Although high school graduates may have taken the correct number of courses to graduate, more often than not they are not the right courses for pursuing postsecondary education. "About 50 percent of all first-time community college students test as underprepared for the academic demands of college-level courses. . . . This percentage . . . has not changed significantly across the United States in at least two decades" (Roueche and Roueche, 1999, p. 5).

Students' academic preparedness is down on a variety of measures, but students' confidence in their abilities is higher than ever (Hansen, 1998).

"While participation rates in higher education have increased, the gaps between high and low income levels and college completion rates have not changed" (Roueche and Roueche, 1999, p. 3). In addition, "numerically, minority students are less equal now than they were thirty years ago on the criterion that really matters: college graduation" (Renner, 2003, p. 40).

As Karen and Karl Schilling point out, we need to look at expectations for effort and engagement if we are to improve student learning. Their research at seven institutions demonstrates a substantial mismatch between student and faculty expectations for academic work outside class, with faculty expecting three times more time on task than students report actually undertaking. Perhaps most significantly, the patterns of first-year student time investment seem to be durable across the four years, implying that the freshman year is an important place to set expectations and study habits (Schilling and Schilling, 1999). The 2002 Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) annual national survey of students corroborates these findings that students are studying less than ever, declining to an all-time low of 33 percent devoting six or more hours per week to studying (Higher Education Research Institute [HERI], 2003). This recent CIRP survey also indicates that trends among students show "grade inflation, increasing financial concerns, heightened stress, academic and political disengagement, declining social activism, and record-level volunteerism" (HERI, 2003, p. 16).

There is a growing demand from employers and parents and from inside the academy itself for a new kind of education that has higher expectations (*Greater Expectations*, 2002; Jones, 2003). Many are calling for a practical education that increases students' capacities for dealing with a rapidly changing world. They emphasize teamwork and collaboration and developing problem-solving skills rather than memorization and the accumulation of facts that will soon become obsolete. Often referred to as "lifelong learning" or "deep learning," these capacities have

become imperatives in our rapidly changing society. In fact, the new research in cognitive science suggests that lifelong learning is also fundamental to our long-term health (Quartz and Sejnowski, 2002).

The Changing Face of the Faculty and Faculty Work Life

Over the past thirty years both the nation's faculty and faculty work life have undergone enormous change. After the large-scale expansion of the higher education system in the 1960s and 1970s, the academy is now in the midst of another shift as large numbers of faculty retire. In fact, more than one-third of the faculty turned over in the 1990s. In a significant study of the entering cohort, Finkelstein, Seal, and Schuster (1998) noted that this new generation is markedly different from the previous generation: these individuals are much more diverse, international, and female, and fewer are based in traditional liberal arts fields. An increasing number come to full-time positions after years of part-time work, and others come from outside the academy altogether.

Surprisingly, however, despite years of national attention on improving teaching and learning and rebalancing faculty roles and rewards, the new cohort is even more research-oriented than their predecessors (Finkelstein, Seal, and Schuster, 1998; O'Meara and Rice, 2004). In general, the new cohort does not differ markedly from their predecessors in relying on traditional lecture-based pedagogies, although women faculty have been found to spend more time with students and rely less on lecturing (Finkelstein, Seal, and Schuster, 1998). This information is corroborated by other recent studies of the freshman year that indicate a growing mismatch between students and faculty, with students reporting that most classes are lecture-based whereas they prefer more experiential approaches (Sax, 2000).

The structure of academic appointments is also changing. More faculty members are being hired to part-time and non-tenure-track appointments. This trend is expected to continue, raising concerns about equity, self-governance, and the ability to build strong local communities of faculty. "The faculty" is becoming a vast territory including different types of appointments with little systematic attention paid to supporting the needs of all. Few institutions, for example, match the University of Phoenix in the attention paid to part-time faculty although these faculty members constitute a majority of the teaching faculty at many institutions.

What we are also seeing is what Martin Finkelstein and Jack Schuster refer to as the "functional respecialization of the faculty, especially in research universities" (Schuster and Finkelstein, 2001). As Jack Schuster

explains, "By this we mean that for 125 years or so the academy has focused on becoming more specialized (and subspecialized) by content area, for purposes of teaching and research. But now . . . a lot of faculty (the off-track, full-time) are being hired for teaching-exclusive or research-exclusive purposes. . . . This shift (it is hardly hyperbolic to call it revolutionary) entails a tangle of trade-offs for undergraduate education: promoting a much overdue reemphasis on teaching, but at the same time, in more subtle ways, undermining the long-term attractiveness of academic careers. In fact, the changes are progressing more rapidly than we can measure them, much less comprehend the downstream implications" (Jack Schuster, personal communication with the authors, October 2003).

Meanwhile, new conceptions are emerging of who can be a teacher and what being a teacher entails. The new universities that deliver education through technology have led the way in redesigning and disaggregating the four traditional faculty roles of curriculum design, curriculum delivery, assessment, and advising. By distinguishing these roles, it becomes obvious that other experts outside the traditional faculty can contribute to student learning and provide expertise that traditionally trained faculty may lack. Numerous reform efforts build on this insight, such as service learning initiatives that involve community members in instructional roles. Learning communities too are experimenting with new roles, building teaching teams that include librarians, student affairs professionals, and student peer leaders who bring new expertise to teaching in more traditional settings.

Calls for Reform in Undergraduate Education

A widespread national consensus is emerging about the issues we face. It is clear that we are on the edge of nearly universal higher education while we are still operating with an infrastructure built for a more selective, homogeneous student body and more generous financial resources. Furthermore, we know a great deal more about what promotes student learning: if widely adopted, these new practices could significantly raise levels of student achievement. Many of our policies, practices, and assumptions are no longer viable. Although there is no clear agreement either about what an undergraduate education should be at the beginning of the twenty-first century or about how to marshal the resources to achieve the vision when it is developed, there are numerous calls for reform and a growing research literature on student learning that offer guidance. With large-scale faculty retirements on the horizon, there is no better time to find ways of putting more effective practices into place.

Myriad recent studies recognize that higher education must restructure itself to meet the new challenges. They stress the rising stakes of under-performance in higher education and point toward concrete ways in which the academy can move ahead to improve undergraduate education and incorporate new information about student learning. Exhibit 1.1 sum-marizes recent significant reports on the different sectors in higher edu-cation. Although each speaks to the history and mission of its particular constituency, they have many similar themes and make similar recom-mendations. First and foremost, of course, is the need to provide access to a growing and diverse population and educate these students effectively. Some, especially those in the sciences, point to an alarming trend toward inequality in our higher education system, which endangers both our economy and our democracy. As one put it, "It is a fundamental respon-sibility of a modern nation to develop the talent of all of its citizens" (Project Kaleidoscope, 2002).

The reports also recognize that new approaches are needed to reach all students. Whether it is a commitment to a twenty-first century practical liberal arts education, as the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) advocates, or the panoply of inquiry-based approaches to learning that the Boyer Commission urges all research universities to embrace, all recognize that both the form and the content of our curriculum must change. Many of the reports describe a variety of exemplary programs, demonstrating that we already have some excellent institutional models in all types of institutions. The challenge is to encour-age wider adoption of these promising approaches.

A third important theme is the relationship between the academy and the larger society. All of these studies advocate for an engaged campus that is connected to the external community in meaningful ways. Like the community colleges, the state and land-grant universities have a long his-tory of community-based education. Thus, it is not surprising that the title of the report compiled by the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities was *Returning to Our Roots* (2001). But this is not a call for a nostalgic return to the past; both the Association of American Colleges and Universities and the Kellogg Commission articu-late a new vision for connecting the academy with the community that is squarely rooted in the twenty-first century and addresses local, regional, and increasingly global issues.

All of the recent reports recognize a need for institutions to rise above "business as usual" and put together a coherent response to the academy's challenges. This calls for difficult dialogues that are fundamental to exer-cising leadership and forging a renewed sense of purpose. It will also

Exhibit 1.1. Recent Major Reports on Undergraduate Education Reform

Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2002)

Analyzes the challenges facing higher education and makes the case for practical, learner-centered changes and a new notion of liberal learning. Describes many exemplary approaches already in place, including active and inquiry-based approaches and learning communities.

Returning to Our Roots (Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities, 1999–2000)

These are six reports on the future of state and land-grant universities and the gap between the teaching and research missions. Report themes include the student experience, student access, the engaged institution, a learning society, a coherent campus culture, and renewing the covenant. Reports stress the need for reengagement and restructuring to become genuine learning communities.

Reinventing Undergraduate Education: A Blueprint for America's Research Universities (Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates in Research Universities, 1998)

Argues for the reinvention of undergraduate education in research universities with recommendations on areas to pursue, including undergraduate research, integrated first-year programs, collaborative learning, freshman seminars, capstone courses, inquiry-based teaching, faculty development, and others.

Reinventing Undergraduate Education: Three Years After the Boyer Report (Reinvention Center, Stony Brook, 2001)

Analyzes the extent to which research universities have responded to the Boyer Commission recommendations. Finds substantial responsiveness but also a need for reaching a wider spectrum of students and integration with faculty roles and rewards.

The Knowledge Net: Connecting Communities, Learners, and Colleges (American Association of Community Colleges, 2000)

Presents the case for community colleges to respond to massive societal changes and create learning-centered changes relevant to the twenty-first century.

Transforming Undergraduate Education in Science, Mathematics, Engineering, and Technology (National Research Council, 1999)

Argues that we are divided into a technologically knowledgeable elite and a disadvantaged majority. Calls for new approaches for all undergraduates to study science, math, technology, and engineering early in their undergraduate education.

Report on the Reports: Recommendations for Action in Support of Undergraduate Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (Project Kaleidoscope, 2002)

Summarizes the major reports in K–12 and post-secondary science education from 1986 to 2001 and concludes that the recommendations are largely congruent in terms of the case for reform. Stresses the need for new approaches that bring all undergraduates to an understanding of the role of science and technology.

require an unprecedented level of commitment, collaboration, and holistic thinking that in many ways goes against the grain of our habits and our structures. Despite this, there is a sense of optimism, not only that we must do this but that we can. This optimism is fueled in part by the growing recognition that we are increasing in our knowledge of what promotes student learning.

What Works in Enhancing Student Learning

Fundamental change requires transformational thinking. One of the main conceptual shifts that has been advocated is the need to move from a teaching to a learning paradigm. First put forward in Robert Barr and John Tagg's widely discussed 1995 article in *Change* magazine, this perspective was described in more detail in John Tagg's recent book *The Learning Paradigm College* (2003). This formulation of the issue resonates with much of the thinking about needing to put student learning at the center of our work. Putting learning first provides a lens through which we can view all of our policies, practices, and structures and helps define what is core and what is peripheral in our institutions. It points to the prevalent flaw of equating faculty effort with student learning and demands that we incorporate a growing body of new research on student learning into our practice. This conceptual shift is significant. The next step is to understand more clearly what promotes student learning and begin to incorporate that knowledge into our teaching practices.

The literature on student learning contains a number of common themes:

- o People construct new knowledge and understandings based on what they already know and believe. Students' prior knowledge affects how they respond to teaching; if we ignore it, it hinders our teaching.

-) Learners are not all the same. Our increasingly diverse students come to learning with a highly variable store of knowledge, experience, and competence and with diverse perspectives and preferred ways of learning.

- o Key to learning is activity, time on task, and social interaction with others, the active use and testing of information and ideas, and the active practicing of skills in a meaningful context.

- o Learning is best promoted by high expectations and clear learning outcomes, with frequent assessment of both students' starting

points and progress and timely feedback from more expert peers and teachers.

○ Learning and understanding develop and are internalized over time, especially as learners engage in meaningful activities and reflect on what they know.

○ Learning cannot be kept separate from identity development.

○ Learning and understanding do not necessarily occur because one is taught.

○ No one type of teaching works all the time. Particular methods follow from the specific types of learning needed to achieve the desired results in a given course.

This research paints a much more complicated picture of learning than we had in the past (National Research Council, 1999; Zull, 2002; Gardiner, 1994; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991; Brown, Collins, and Duguid, 1988). It also shows us that the challenge of improving student learning is not simply about introducing teachers to a few new "techniques." The relationship between pedagogy and content is complicated, and many of our ideas and practices are unexamined and based on misconceptions. Understanding how people learn, what effective learning environments look like, how modern technologies might have an impact on learning, and how all of this shapes the instructional role is a great challenge that requires rethinking how we train and support our teachers and construct our learning environments.

Disseminating the Research on Student Learning and Promising Practices

Over the past twenty years, there have been a variety of efforts to disseminate the research on student learning and promote promising practices at both the national level and on individual campuses. The major higher education associations have provided consistent and focused leadership to the effort to improve undergraduate education. The American Association for Higher Education, the League for Innovation in the Community College, and the American Association of Community Colleges have promoted national discussions about service learning, instructional uses of technology, and learning outcomes, while the Association of American Colleges and Universities has led the national conversations about diversity, liberal learning, and general education. Many other professional associations have also been active in the national effort to improve both undergraduate education and student learning.

One of the most important conceptual leadership efforts came from Ernest Boyer, Gene Rice, and Lee Shulman and their work on the scholarship of teaching, which called for a broader definition of faculty work and scholarship, a more empirically grounded sense of good practice, and more robust ways to describe and evaluate teaching. Since the early 1990s, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) have worked together to promote the scholarship of teaching approach as a concrete way to redefine and raise the status of teaching. Hundreds of campuses have been involved in this effort, which has led to a broader notion of faculty roles and rewards on many of them (O'Meara and Rice, 2004; Pat Hutchings, personal communication with the author, October 2003).

The assessment movement has also been important in undergraduate education reform. As Peter Ewell points out, the assessment movement started in the mid-1980s on the heels of the significant national report *Involvement in Learning* (Ewell, 2002a). Almost from the outset, assessment work developed a dual focus on improvement and accountability. At the same time, assessment reforms have focused on the classroom, giving teachers important tools for enhancing their practice. Tom Angelo and Pat Cross encouraged teachers to experiment with classroom assessment approaches, or "CATs," as they came to be called. Together they wrote an eminently practical handbook that provides dozens of examples that teachers can use in their classrooms to shed light on their assumptions about teaching and learning (Angelo and Cross, 1993). Also in the "ask-them" tradition, Richard Light's work at Harvard demonstrated that we all have a lot to learn from asking our students about their learning (Light, 1990, 2001).

Although many reform approaches have been cross-disciplinary, some have focused on the academic disciplines. Teaching journals have appeared in a number of disciplines, as have projects to encourage new pedagogical approaches. The AAHE was particularly important in collaborating with the disciplines on its twenty-three monographs on service learning in the disciplines, its work on teaching portfolios, and its work on the scholarship of teaching. Meanwhile, the Association of American Colleges reexamined study in the major, finding a widespread problem in terms of coherence (Association of American Colleges, 1990).

The National Science Foundation has given significant support to innovative approaches in the sciences, funding a variety of reforms in mathematics, the sciences, and engineering. Many of these efforts were designed to reverse the high attrition rates in these disciplines and address the shortage of graduates in mathematics, science, and engineering. Inquiry-based

approaches to learning and an emphasis on undergraduate research are important ingredients in most of these reforms, as are efforts to change the chilly climate of many science classrooms and build a greater sense of community. Developing peer support systems among students has often been successful in building community and encouraging persistence in the sciences (Seymour and Hewitt, 1997).

Meanwhile, on individual campuses, one of the most promising trends has been the widespread establishment of teaching and learning centers and faculty development programs, providing a dissemination system for new information about student learning and a support system for growing numbers of new faculty members.

Old Structures and Practices

In spite of the calls for reform, exciting new research about student learning, and robust national dissemination efforts, much about higher education has changed but little in the last hundred years. Our academic structure remains a curriculum of social efficiency divided into three- or four-credit courses and fifty-minute classes. Grades, seat time, and credit hours remain the basic currency of higher education, even though they are increasingly recognized as inadequate measures of student learning. Although focusing on student learning outcomes is generally conceived as the best new alternative to credit hours and seat time, few institutions have adopted this approach in a deep and meaningful way (Ewell, 2002a). Those that have moved to student learning outcomes often find themselves caught between the new approach and perverse traditional policies, especially as they relate to funding and student financial aid.

Although it is true that large freshman lecture courses subsidize small upper-division courses, the attrition rate in that crucial first year makes this a dubious practice. Following the familiar pattern in higher education, many new reform efforts are add-on's and promising projects rather than true reforms. In fact, the emerging alternative practices (such as tutorials, seminars, learning portfolios, and so forth) are often viewed as labor-intensive and costly and face serious challenges in scaling up to reach large numbers of students.

Discipline-based academic departments continue as the mainstay of most college and university organizational structures. And although they have been important in delivering discipline-based courses, they pose a serious challenge to many functions and programs that are more institutionwide and cross-cutting, such as general education and interdisciplinary education, often creating role conflicts for faculty interested in these

broader forms of teaching. As a result, general education programs often face staffing challenges because the faculty's primary loyalty is to their academic disciplines and their department.

Faculty culture remains rooted in a long tradition of autonomy and individualism. At research universities in particular, the faculty are increasingly specialized and national or international in their affiliations. Developing a sense of institutional community and overall faculty responsibility for it is a challenge, especially in larger institutions. According to William H. Sullivan in *The University as Citizen: Institutional Identity and Social Responsibility,* many faculty members have retreated to what he calls *instrumental individualism,* avoiding the more difficult and important alternative of coming to grips with a new institutional purpose appropriate to our times (Sullivan, n.d.). As a result, many institutions have found it very difficult to have meaningful discussions about the overall curriculum.

Peter Ewell has said that we are caught in a number of paradoxes, which he describes as "key dialectics"—seemingly opposing positions that must be accommodated (Ewell, 2002c). He suggests that the only way out of the apparent contradictions is a conceptual shift and new institutional structures and ways of doing things. Even in teaching and learning, for example, Ewell points out that we are faced with the paradox of increasing individualization and fragmentation of the curriculum *and* a need for coherence. As students become increasingly mobile, attending two, three, or four colleges, it is not easy to imagine a simple curricular fix to the coherence issue because the solution is beyond the purview of a single institution. In the organizational domain, Ewell says that we face the apparent contradiction that our existing modular forms of organization (academic departments) are not effective in certain areas—like general education, interdisciplinary education, and learning communities—that require more cross-cutting organizational structures. Here the challenge is to create meaningful hybrid structures that do not lead to turf wars and marginalization.

Promoting Change in a Time of Limited Resources

As the epigraph that began this chapter pointed out, higher education is now facing "serious tests of its resourcefulness with the significant shifts in the social landscape" (Sullivan, n.d., p. 1). Providing meaningful access to higher education for an increasing number of students is a clear priority, but this commitment comes on the heels of the recognition that resources for higher education will be constrained in the future, making

"business as usual" impossible (Guskin, 1994a, 1994b, 1996; Guskin and Marcy, 2003; Massy and Wilger, 1996; Massy, 2003).

In comparison with other industrialized nations, the United States spends more per student on higher education and the gap widened between 1995 and 1998 (Sherman, 2003), but most observers contend that recent funding growth patterns for public higher education are not sustainable in the face of tax resistance and increased competition for resources. "In 1997, the Council on Aid to Education . . . analyzed ongoing trends in educational support and expenditures, and determined that if all sources of support continued to follow current trends, and higher education continued to model its expenditure pattern, higher education would face a funding shortfall of about $38 billion—nearly 25 percent of its needs—by 2015" (Council on Aid to Education, 1997, p. 3).

Already there are signs of increasing inequality in access to higher education (Educational Testing Service, 1998). Reports with such dramatic titles as *Losing Ground* (2002c) and *College Affordability in Jeopardy* (2002a), both from the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, and *Empty Promises* (2002) from the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, demonstrate that access is increasingly tied to income and that the American Dream is falling out of the reach of too many. Rather than face the challenge of setting new directions in the shifting landscape, many colleges and universities are facing the dilemma of containing costs and cutting budgets by a combination of hunkering down—hoping for a better day—and nibbling away at the budget base through across-the-board cuts, a strategy that will not work in the long run (Guskin and Marcy, 2003).

The Project on the Future of Higher Education is one effort aimed at exploring the future of higher education in the context of this increasing pressure on resources (see www.antioch.edu/pfhe). The project brought together sixteen leaders in higher education to explore future scenarios and suggest ways to enhance student learning, maintain quality in faculty work life, and cut costs simultaneously. They see using technology, creating new forms of instructional leadership, taking better advantage of approaches known to enhance student learning, and putting a sharper focus on student learning outcomes as key elements (Guskin and Marcy, 2001, 2003; Ewell, 2002c).

The kind of reforms that the Project on the Future of Higher Education and other national reports are recommending cannot come easily, in part because a variety of questionable assumptions shape our views of what is possible and desirable. As one higher education analyst, Ann Ferren, notes, we assume, for example, that quality means more expenditures per student

and that class size is a primary measure of quality. There are many other questionable assumptions, such as the following: The more specialized courses a department offers, the better it is. Every faculty member ought to have the opportunity to teach one or more specialties. Enrollments are a measure of a department's success. Courses should be offered to satisfy all available markets and emerging interests (Ferren, 1997, p. 549).

After reviewing more than twenty-six hundred books, articles, and other writings about student learning, Patrick Terenzini and Ernest Pascarella (1994) reached similar conclusions about myths that get in the way of reform. Some of the widespread myths they cite are the following:

- Educational quality is a function of the institution's wealth, resources, and selectivity.

- The lecture is a proven, effective way of teaching undergraduate students.

- The only significant influences on student learning come through the faculty and in the classroom.

- Students' academic and nonacademic experiences are separate and unrelated influences on learning.

Questionable assumptions and myths close many doors to education reform, blinding us to resources and new ways of thinking about roles and responsibilities. They can also misdirect us toward simplistic solutions. Many reform efforts are narrowly conceived around a single factor, such as altering the lecture or reducing class size, without taking all the other factors into account that would make the effort more far-reaching and successful.

The Course Redesign Project

One significant recent project challenged some of these assumptions. It worked from the premise that we can improve student learning while simultaneously reducing the cost of instruction if technology plays an important role (Twigg, 2003). Supported by The Pew Charitable Trusts, the Course Redesign Project involved thirty colleges and universities that redesigned their large introductory-level courses, often called *gateway courses*, which enroll the great majority of students across the nation. The courses include algebra, American government, introductory psychology, and introductory chemistry (Twigg, 2003; see also www.center.rpi.edu/Pewgrant).

As project director Carol Twigg points out, most of the efforts involved substantial structural change: "Some eliminate some lectures; others

eliminate all lectures. The premise is that faculty do not need to spend as much time presenting information. Lectures are replaced with a variety of learning resources, all of which involve more active learning or more individualized assistance. . . . The primary goal is to shift students from a passive, note-taking role to an active learning orientation. . . . As one math professor puts it, 'Students learn math by doing math, not by listening to someone talk about math'" (Twigg, n.d.).

This project demonstrated comprehensive innovation driven by learner-centered thinking that also reached a large number of students. It required a detailed examination of the real costs of instruction, something that has often been recommended but seldom implemented. As Twigg (n.d., p. 31) points out:

> Doing a careful analysis of the instructional tasks associated with the traditional course format allows one to gain an understanding of those that can be shifted from personnel to technology-based materials and those that cannot. After determining the pedagogical principles that need to be employed in the redesign and the kinds of instructional personnel who are essential to the specific tasks, one can experiment with a variety of designs and calculate their associated costs. Most academic problems can be addressed in a variety of ways; there is no one perfect redesign strategy. The principles are generic, however. Cost savings result from shifting the time spent by the instructional personnel to the technology.

A more learning-centered paradigm encourages us to make the crucial move to thinking about ways to enhance student learning that get beyond simply equating student learning with faculty time in the classroom. The Course Redesign Project demonstrates one way to rethink how large introductory classes can be taught by using technology, altering faculty time in the classroom, and creating new ways for students to work together. The project was successful in cutting costs, increasing student learning, and improving faculty satisfaction. Like learning communities, this project took structure, pedagogy, and roles and relationships as variables that could be altered.

Learning Communities and Undergraduate Education Reform

In this climate of rising challenges, growing calls for reform, broad-scale experimentation, and strong research on learning, learning communities have emerged as a compelling strategy to use in restructuring undergraduate education. Carefully designed and implemented learning

communities can simultaneously address the issues of enhancing student learning and building the quality of our academic communities in a cost-effective manner. Because they can provide a holistic and coherent approach to reform, learning communities offer a potentially more sustainable approach than many more narrowly based reform initiatives.

A Definition

Although learning communities have a long and rich history, which is discussed in Chapter Two, the contemporary concept and implementation started to build into a national movement in the mid-1980s with substantial expansion in the mid-1990s. Now they have become so widespread that the term *learning community* is used to apply to many different educational strategies. More clearly defining learning communities and delineating their key features can help us understand these programs' intentions and also provide a standard against which to judge what they are attempting.

In this text, we use the term *learning communities* to refer to a variety of curricular approaches that intentionally link or cluster two or more courses, often around an interdisciplinary theme or problem, and enroll a common cohort of students. They represent an intentional restructuring of students' time, credit, and learning experiences to build community, enhance learning, and foster connections among students, faculty, and disciplines. At their best, learning communities practice pedagogies of active engagement and reflection. On residential campuses, many learning communities are also living-learning communities, restructuring the residential environment to build community and integrate academic work with out-of-class experiences.

The Social Construction of Knowledge

As reform efforts have evolved over the past eighty years, they carry a set of assumptions, summarized in Exhibit 1.2, about the nature of knowledge, student learning, the organization of the curriculum, and the role of the faculty. These assumptions are strongly associated with a view known as the *social construction of knowledge*. Citing the work of Kenneth Bruffee, K. Patricia Cross defines this view as follows: "We construct and maintain knowledge . . . by negotiating with one another in communities of knowledgeable peers. . . . Knowledge is actively built by learners as they shape and build mental frameworks to make sense of their environments. . . . Knowledge is not something that is transferred in an authoritarian structure from teacher to students but rather as something

Exhibit 1.2. Assumptions Underlying Traditional Approaches to Education and Recent Reform Efforts

Traditional Assumptions About Higher Education	Assumptions Underlying Recent Reform Efforts
Discovery of knowledge is more important than practical applications.	Experiential learning and practice serve to deepen knowledge and understanding.
Meaning is seen as something that is individually constructed.	Meaning is seen as socially constructed, through collaborative learning.
Stresses objective nature of knowledge, rationalizes value of knowledge.	Admits subjective and value-laden nature of knowledge.
Emphasizes "procedural" and "separate" knowing.	Encourages connected, relational, and constructed knowing.
Student learning and development are seen as something occurring primarily in the classroom.	Student learning and development occur in and outside the classroom.
Focus more on the nature of the curriculum than on who is in the classroom.	Increasing focus is on who is in the classroom.
Curriculum is delivered through discrete courses, emphasizing seat time and credit hours.	Delivery system is organized around larger packages of time and credit; alternative ways of validating learning.
Curriculum is built around disciplines.	Curriculum is built around interdisciplinary foci, often around themes or problems or questions.
Emphasis is on didactic instruction, rather than connecting theory and practice.	Experiential learning and practice are used to deepen knowledge and understanding.
Teacher is seen as authoritative deliverer of content.	Teacher is seen as designer and manager of learning processes.
Reflection is considered an optional afterthought.	Reflection is seen as central to learning and meaning making.

that teachers and students work interdependently to develop. Thus it fosters active learning over passive learning, cooperation over competition, and community over isolation" (Cross, 1998, p. 5).

There is now a fairly strong consensus on these views of knowledge and student learning among most learning and student development theorists,

cognitive scientists, and leaders and practitioners of reform efforts at both the K–12 and postsecondary levels. These perspectives have profound implications for how we think about curriculum, teaching practices, student assessment, and co-curricular activity, and especially for how we prepare faculty members for the professoriate. Although these assumptions are intriguing and hold great promise for strengthening student engagement and learning, they are also problematic because most faculty members were not taught in these ways and most have not been exposed to these theories and their implications for classroom practice.

Nonetheless, learning communities provide a significant arena for putting these theories into practice. The changed structure of learning communities brings together courses and disciplines, learners and teachers to provide a larger and more holistic platform for realizing the more recent assumptions described in Exhibit 1.2. The learning community structure is itself infinitely adaptable to different kinds of curricular and co-curricular settings. What has made it attractive and widespread is this adaptability; educators can shape and reshape the strategy around specific curricular or student needs. Central to learning community design and implementation are five core practices: community, integration, active learning, diversity, and reflection and assessment. Although these core practices, which are described in detail in Chapter Four, are important in any educational setting, they can be more fully developed in learning communities simply because learning communities provide more time and space by restructuring the curriculum. In this changed structure, new roles and relationships also become possible. Many different people can come together to teach in learning communities—faculty, student affairs professionals, librarians, graduate teaching assistants, student peer mentors. Learning community programs are often a team effort, setting up the conditions for interdependence and learning on the part of all the people who teach in them.

Learning Communities as a Reform Effort

At their best, learning communities embody an analysis of what is needed to reform higher education (curricular restructuring), a theory of learning (based on current research), a commitment to certain educational goals (putting student learning at the center of our work), and a commitment to the importance of community (a necessary condition for learning). They rest on the belief that we can improve student academic success if we design a more appropriate educational structure for addressing important intellectual and social issues, recognize learning as a shared responsibility,

and encourage active learning and community building. They create venues for synergistic activity to occur among people and ideas.

The learning community approach offers a unique opportunity to be resourceful in a time of limited resources. Unlike many approaches to education reform, learning communities are not a simple response to one set of issues. They represent a holistic response, what Peter Senge has called a *high leverage point*. Because of this we believe learning communities have enormous potential in helping to achieve the larger aims of undergraduate education reform. They can be a convergence zone for many related reforms. At the same time, putting learning communities in place requires not only reforming the curriculum but also reforming many of our working relationships and the organizational systems on our campuses. This work of reform, of changing complex systems, is difficult because we tend to see the world and our education system in terms of separate, unrelated forces (Senge, 1990). We tend to underinvest in the kinds of ongoing dialogue, comprehensive planning, and staff development that are needed to bring about deep and enduring change (Ewell, 1997). As a result, educational reforms are usually additive rather than transformational, having little impact on our core values, structures, and practices. Some learning communities—though by no means most—seem to be reaching beyond this historic pattern of educational tinkering. In the next chapter we explore the history of learning communities and the lessons we can draw from this history. Time will tell whether learning communities will be remembered as a large but ultimately minimal reform movement or as an explosion of activity and energy whose leaders recognized their potential, harnessed their energy, and brought about the revolution they were able to create.
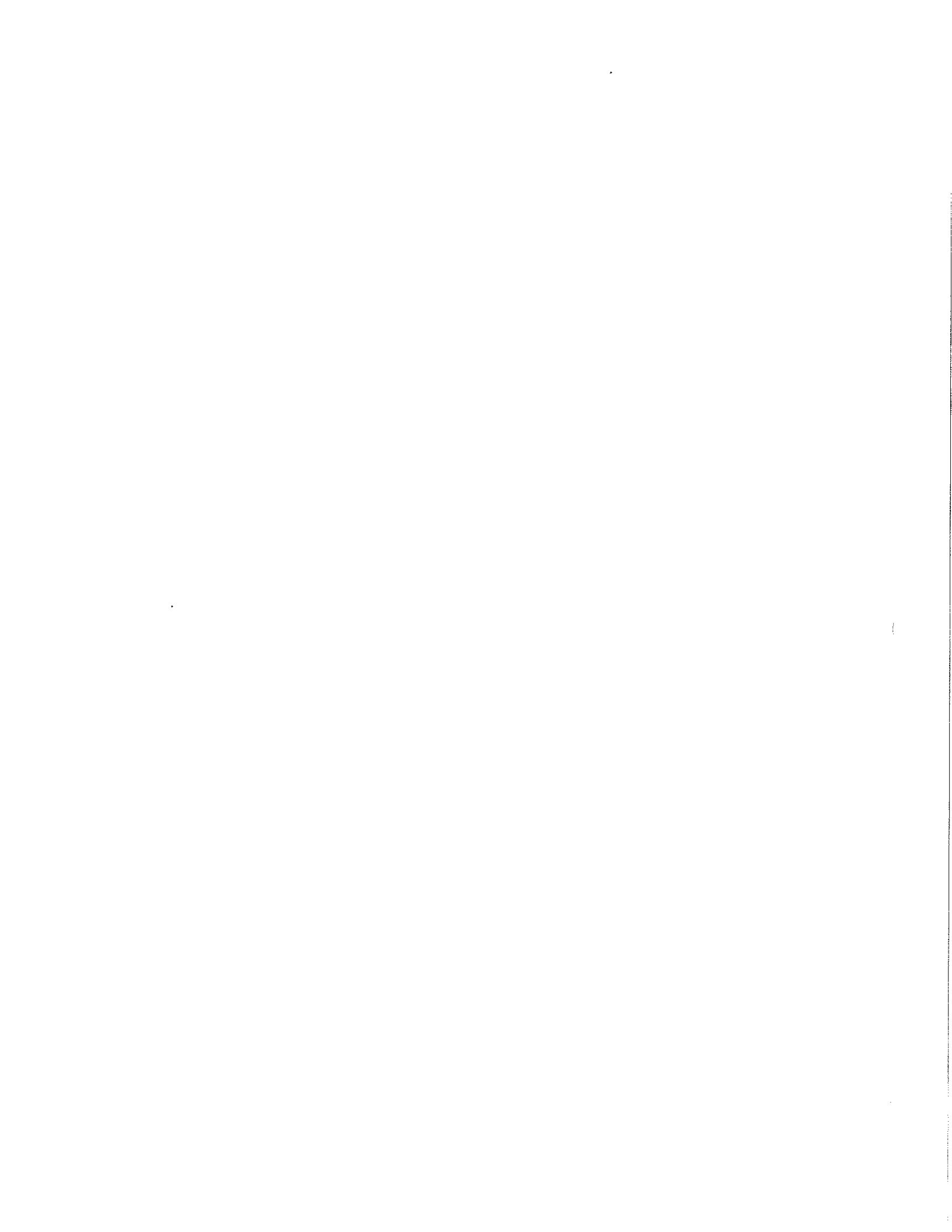
The Challenge of Learning Communities as a Growing National Movement

By Barbara Leigh Smith, Co-Director National Learning Communities Project, Evergreen State College

Learning communities have become a growing national movement.[1] Four or five hundred colleges and universities now offer them, and the number continues to increase. They are found in virtually every state, in both public and private colleges and universities, and in a diverse range of institutions. Learning communities are a broad structural innovation that can address a variety of issues from student retention to curriculum coherence, from faculty vitality to building a greater sense of community within our colleges. On some campuses, the learning community effort is very large; on others, it is small. On most, it is fragile, even if it has been in place for several years.

At this juncture it's appropriate to ask why learning communities have become so pervasive and what challenges this growing national movement faces. These questions are timely for learning communities are at a transition point. On the early adopting campuses, they are facing classic second-stage reform effort issues of succession and institutionalization, and the movement itself faces challenges as it becomes larger and more diffuse.

How and Why Learning Communities Became Pervasive

The learning community movement has numerous roots and branches and a long history of start-up, failure, and rebirth at another time and place. The basic ideas underlying learning communities are not new. The roots lie in the 1920s with the establishment of a short-lived program at the University of Wisconsin, the Meiklejohn Experimental College (see Brown 1981; Cronon and Jenkins 1994; Powell 1981). The seeds of many of the current value conflicts that threaten learning communities were sown in this earlier time.

Meiklejohn lived in a time when the elective system became popular and research-focused specialized academic departments were gaining ascendancy. Meiklejohn thought the structure and values of the emergent research university were becoming antithetical to the task of preparing students for democratic citizenship, a goal integral to the very notion of public education. He saw the division of the curriculum into smaller and smaller units of credit and the growth of specialized academic departments as critical structural issues that would ultimately drive both relationships between students and faculty and the content of the curriculum. He predicted that narrow departments would make it difficult to raise important interdisciplinary issues and the fragmented nature of the curriculum would frustrate committed teachers trying to create a sense of deep engagement and community. "General education" (education for citizenship), he rightly surmised, would become nobody's business.

Meiklejohn's solution was to establish the "Experimental College," an interdisciplinary, team-taught, two-year lower division curriculum focusing on democracy. The curriculum was both historical and contemporary, looking at the roots of democracy and the issues facing twentieth-century America. The Experimental College tried to build community and create a seamless interface between the living and learning environment. The pedagogy stressed active learning, seminars, and assignments that asked students to put the theory they studied into practice, a radical notion at the time. Teachers were seen as advisors and facilitators of learning rather than as distant figures on a lectern.

It was not an easy sell. Enrollment was lower than anticipated. The students were often seen as unruly, and Meiklejohn and the faculty spent much time fighting the values and power structure of the university. Despite being a favorite of the new president of the university, the program was abandoned after five years. Although it didn't last very long, the program had an enormous impact on its students. Recent histories describe it as a high point in the university's history, referring to it as "Camelot on the Lake" (Cronon and Jenkins 1994).

The next major chapter in learning community history is in the 1960s when the higher education system nearly doubled in size and the community college system was broadly established. This was a time of innovation with various experiments with structure. Cluster colleges were one attempt to humanize the scale of higher education and promote community. Many traditional institutions established innovative programs and sub-colleges such as the residential college at Michigan, the Centennial Program at the University of Nebraska, and Fairhaven College within Western Washington University. Innovative new colleges were also founded including the Evergreen State College, the University of California-Santa Cruz, and Empire State College.

Interdisciplinary approaches were an important aspect of these innovations, but only a few significantly altered traditional organizational structures. As a result, they often contained internal contradictions and faced substantial compatibility challenges as they developed. Very few survived into the 1990s with their founding values intact. Throughout this period, there was debate about whether these innovations could scale-up and become cost effective. This issue remained unsettled until well into the 1980s when institutions like the Evergreen State College proved that they could. Meanwhile, mainstream institutions picked off their innovations, broadly appropriating ideas such as student-centered learning, writing across the curriculum, active learning, and interdisciplinary programs.

Several of the most important programs in this era were in California. In the mid-1960's the Meiklejohn model was resurrected by a former student, Joseph Tussman, at the University of California-Berkeley and at San Jose State College by Merv Cadwallader, a friend of Tussman's. These programs were also short-lived but they became seedbeds for future endeavors. Cadwallader carried the idea to a number of other institutions, including The Evergreen State College. Tussman wrote an eloquent account of the rationale for curricular restructuring in his book *Experiment at Berkele* (now reprinted as *The Beleaguered College,* 1997).

Learning communities resurfaced with the establishment of the Evergreen State College, a new institution holistically designed around the structural notions underlying the Meiklejohn-Tussman integrated curriculum (for an account of this see Jones 1981; Jones and Smith 1984; Smith and McCann 2001). About five years later, a number of institutions on the east coast, notably SUNY Stony Brook and La Guardia Community College also developed new curricular restructuring models. These adaptations made the idea of learning communities applicable to a broader range of institutions, especially research universities and community colleges. Patrick Hill, then at SUNY Stony Brook, was passionate about the growing social and intellectual atomism and the mismatched expectations between students and faculty in research universities, but he was also a pragmatist who appreciated incremental change and local adaptations.

There was a joining of the East and West Coast learning community effort when Hill became provost of the Evergreen State College in 1983. The momentum for learning communities dramatically increased in 1985 with the establishment of the Washington Center for Undergraduate Education at the Evergreen State College. Led by Barbara Leigh Smith and Jean MacGregor, the Center helped develop and disseminate a language about learning communities along with a variety of models that could be locally adapted. It became a support system for people interested in learning communities.

A number of other factors contributed to the pervasive reach of the learning community effort. The significant research of Vince Tinto, a major figure in the area of student retention, was critical. In the early 1990's Tinto undertook a major study of the impact of learning communities and collaborative learning (Radcliff and Associates 1995). He looked at the learning community programs at two very different institutions-the University of Washington and Seattle Central Community College-producing the first in-depth study. The results clearly demonstrated their effectiveness and showed that involving and academically challenging campus environments could be purposefully built on commuter campuses. At the same time, Alexander Astin's important book, *What Matters in College,* appeared. Between Astin and Tinto, both the dimensions of the problem of undergraduate education *and* some solutions were offered. The leadership of people such as Astin, Tinto, Peter Ewell, John Gardner, Carol Schneider, and Pat Cross was also important in spreading the word about learning communities. They spoke to different audiences in academic and student affairs, in research universities and community colleges, and broadened the reach of the learning community effort.

The last fifteen years have been a time of broad discussion about teaching and learning. Many powerful pedagogies have emerged on the national landscape: service learning, assessment, writing across the curriculum, inquiry-based approaches to the sciences, multicultural education, collaborative and cooperative learning, and problem-centered learning, to mention just a few. These reform efforts have a common aim of promoting active learning and what has been referred to as "deep learning." Numerous funding agencies and national organizations and conferences have supported these teaching and learning reform efforts and featured learning community work over the last decade.

Many innovations fail to develop broad reach simply because they become too intramural, operating in isolation of potentially related enterprises. What's notable about the learning community effort is that it has often joined forces with these other efforts, providing a broader structural platform for implementing these other powerful pedagogies. This has both deepened learning community pedagogy and aims, and broadened the audience and base of potential allies. This could go further.

Recently, regional nodes of leadership have started to emerge beyond the early adopters. Delta College in Michigan and William Rainey Harper College in Illinois now jointly sponsor an annual learning community conference, and several convening campuses are now emerging in California. An extensive relationship has been established between IUPUI, George Mason University, Portland State University, and Temple University and other urban universities. A National Learning Community Project at the Evergreen State College funded by Pew Charitable Trusts should deepen this trend toward regional collaboration.

Learning Communities Past and Present
The history of learning communities is an evolving story of reformers and innovators doing their work. It is a story about the power of personal commitments and relationships in building reform efforts. It is also a story about the power of institutional structures, processes, and value systems in shaping our institutions. There is continuity over time with a number of themes in this learning community history. The themes of democracy, access, and classrooms as community particularly stand out. Early learning communities dating back to the early twentieth century were concerned with the role schools play in preparing students for responsible citizenship. The question "education for what" was at the forefront. This influenced the curriculum content and the educational practices. Early learning communities were also concerned about making higher education widely available. These were not enclaves for the elite. Continuing to expand access was seen as critical to the evolving American experiment with democracy.

Another way to look at this history is to note that, across these generations of leaders, we also see dramatically different leadership styles, organizational strategies, and settings. Learning communities in the latter part of the twentieth century are characterized by collaborative leadership models-models which came in with the feminist movement, the civil rights movements, and the reform efforts in the 1960s and 1970s. There has been a shift towards movement thinking and community organizing strategies in the contemporary learning community movement. The effort is more purposefully inter-institutional with the rapid dissemination of ideas and strategies across institutions. There is also a systematic effort to build bridges to related enterprises and to broaden leadership across the movement. In many institutions the learning community effort has become robust precisely because the organizers have been savvy about working with the existing organizational structures and adapting them to their needs.

The Challenges Learning Communities Face
While the learning community movement is certainly succeeding by some measures-if only sheer size, it also faces significant challenges. The most obvious challenge is that of

transition and succession as the early adopters move on. All institutions face this challenge. Other challenges are deeper and perhaps more important. I will close by briefly describing four: the challenge of student learning and faculty development; the challenge of diversity, the challenge of institutional change, and the challenge of purpose.

The Challenge of Student Learning and Faculty Development

We know that learning communities can be a powerful platform for both student learning and faculty development. We need to figure out better ways to put what we know about student learning into our learning community designs. Unless learning communities build upon the best approaches to student learning, the structural changes will only produce minimal improvements. Too many learning communities are little more than block registration devices, with little alteration of the teaching and learning environment.

Learning communities across the nation are under-investing in faculty development. So it isn't surprising that pedagogical approaches have changed little. With the imminent retirement of about half of the nation's faculty, this is a very good time to invest extensively in faculty development and to rethink the ways in which we support the development of excellent teachers. Learning communities can be a powerful faculty development structure, especially if they involve team teaching or team planning, which provides a natural setting for the day-to-day coaching that can lead to genuine growth and development. There is no shortage of good literature to draw upon. John Bransford's book *How People Learn* or Lionel Gardner's *Redesigning Higher Education for Dramatic Gains in Student Learning* are good places to start.

The Challenge of Diversity

The challenge of diversity is a multifaceted issue about who participates in learning communities (students and faculty), what the curriculum is and where it is located, and how the teaching and learning environments are structured. Learning communities continue to struggle to address the multiple issues of diversity. At the same time, they have great promise. We know that they can provide a powerful means of serving an increasingly diverse student population. Some schools have used them strategically to address serious retention issues in parts of the curriculum that are not serving students well. Many schools are targeting learning communities on developmental education since this is a graveyard for too many students. These efforts often lead to dramatically improved student retention.

The Challenge of Institutional Change

If the learning community movement is to have lasting impact, the challenge of institutional change needs serious attention. Across the nation we see persistent weaknesses in terms of leadership structures, resource investments, faculty development, real curriculum integration, assessment, and pedagogical change. Effectively addressing institutional change requires a more comprehensive point of view. Eventually the learning community effort must move from being an innovation or an interesting project to being a *reform*. Being a reform requires structural change, reworking roles and relationships, and generally re-engineering the organization so that learning communities are appropriately supported.

The Challenge of Purpose

Learning communities often begin in a flurry of enthusiasm without clear goals or planning. There's nothing wrong with this; it is typical of innovations. But if the effort is to last and have a significant impact, the institution needs to eventually come to a common understanding about their goals and organize appropriately to support them. The question I want to raise here is about whether our vision is large enough.

Learning communities re-emerged in the last twenty years in a period of rapid expansion of the higher education system and a climate of widespread experimentation with new approaches to teaching and learning. At the same time, the education system as a whole has come under increasing public scrutiny. This is a time of rising criticism outside the academy and also a time of growing crisis within the nation's colleges and universities. At no time have the questions "education for what" and "education for whom" been more pressing.

The learning community effort now stands at a crossroads, at the institutional level and as a national movement. As it is now a large-scale effort, pointed questions need to be raised about how quality can be maintained and strengthened as this endeavor continues to scale-up. If we look back at earlier learning communities, it is very clear what they were about. They had big goals in terms of their vision of society and the role of the academy. They saw learning communities as a means for developing the capacity to live in a democratic society. Now, these very issues are being raised again in a variety of ways - through the service learning movement, through the multifaceted diversity work, and through the larger national conversations about the direction of higher education. The learning community movement is poised to be a major player in this conversation. By re-engaging some of these fundamental issues of purpose and squarely facing the multiple challenges, today's learning communities may find new strength.

Notes

[1] As we use it, the term "learning community" refers to the purposeful restructuring of the curriculum by linking or clustering courses that enroll a common cohort of students. This represents an intentional structuring of the students time, credit, and learning experiences to build community, and foster more explicit connections among students, faculty, and disciplines (Gabelnick, MacGregor, Mathews, and Smith).

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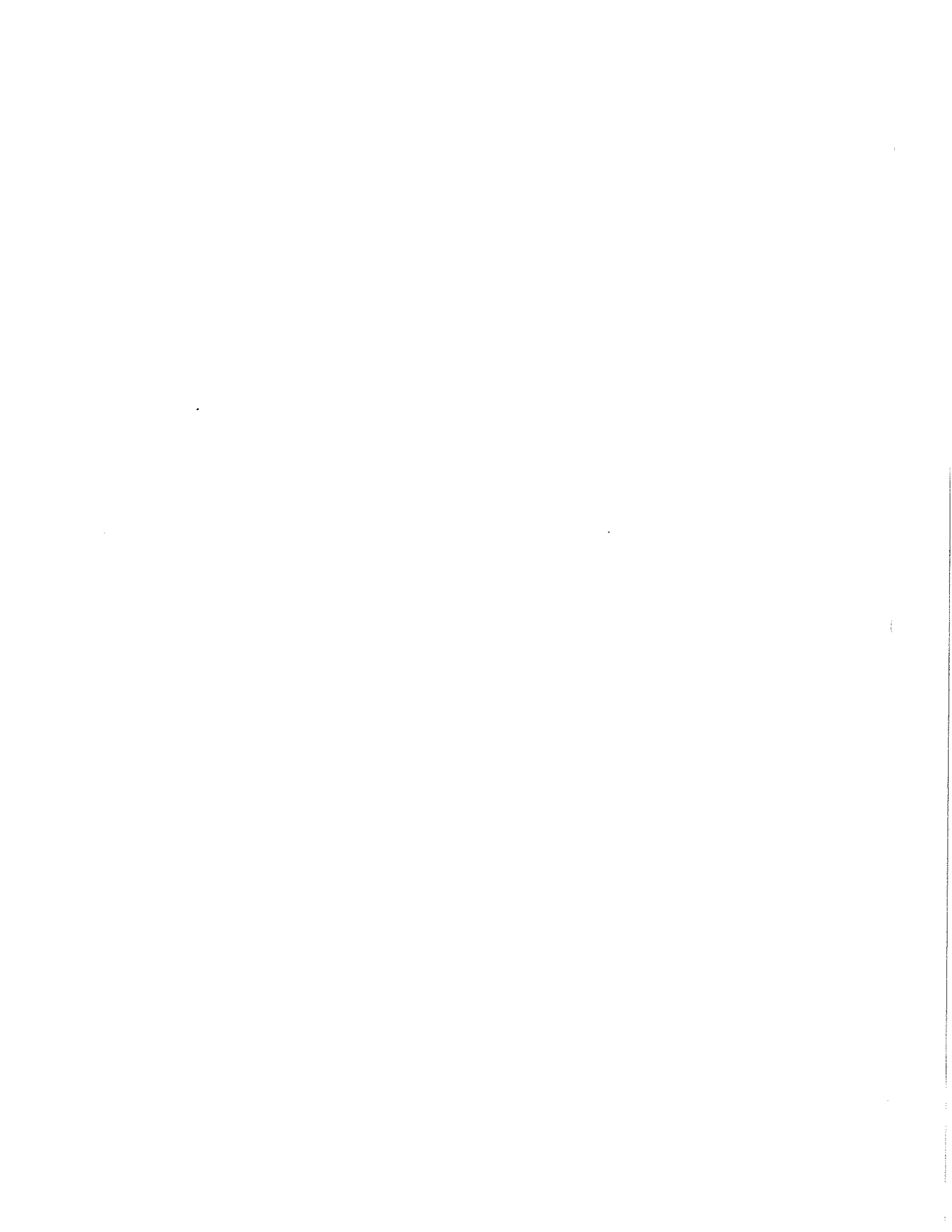
"Realizing the Potential of Learning Communities"

Barbara Leigh Smith, Co-director
National Learning Communities Dissemination Project, The Evergreen State College

Keynote address for "Building Communities of Active Learners"
Southwest Regional Learning Communities Conference
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It's a pleasure to be with you today. A special thanks to the Maricopa folks for an excellent conference. This is a wonderful learning opportunity for all of us and a terrific time to re-gather our strength as a community committed to educational reform. I have no illusions about how difficult this work can be down in the trenches. It's often an emotional roller coaster on the precipice between hope and despair, especially in the tough fiscal environment we now face. I have enormous respect for all of you who work with such creativity, dedication and perseverance. You are the reason learning communities have become such a vibrant force for educational change.

I'd like to turn my comments today toward the question of sustainability and what it will take to realize the full potential of learning communities. I also want to place learning communities in the context of larger efforts and trends in higher education. Learning communities are now a large-scale movement, touching hundreds of institutions of all types. My overall argument is that we are now at a turning point where we need to raise our aspirations and move more towards transformational thinking rather than thinking of the learning community effort as simply an interesting project or innovation. I'll end by sketching out what I see as the key areas of challenge and opportunity. I think you'll hear lots of resonance with what others have said at this conference.

As many of you know, I've been in this work for a long time. Right now I'm co-directing a large national learning community project funded by Pew Chairitible Trusts with Jean MacGregor. This project's central goal is to move the LC effort to the next stage in terms of both quality and reach. To this end, we've been sponsoring summer institutes for campuses wanting to send teams to do serious institutional planning, developing a major website, writing a series of monographs to be published with AAHE (12 to be exact), working with 57 learning community fellows who we see as a next generation of leaders, and sponsoring regional events like this one.

(By the way, the website includes a national directory of learning communities. Please register your program on our LC website if you haven't done so already. The address is on the back page of the handout you have with the bibliography.) As I said regional conferences like this one are part of our effort. Another one sponsored by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) will be held in April in Atlanta. In June there is yet another in Minneapolis sponsored by Augsberg College. Next fall there will be others in the southeast. Our hope is that we will make this good work more available

to large groups of people by bringing it to different regions of the country. Taking different groups of people to LC conferences and to visit campuses is a great way to recruit people to LC's.

Another project I'm involved with is called the "Project on the Future of Higher Education." This group met last weekend in Tucson. Everyone in the group is convinced that higher education is in a pivotal period of transformation as a result of a variety of factors including the growing mobility and diversity of students, the increasing emphasis on student learning, the impact of technology, and growing resource constraints. The project is trying to develop models of higher education that can simultaneously increase the quality of student learning and reduce cost. Fifteen of us gather every three months to talk and write about this. Even though this is a very smart group of people, this has been a very tough job... I want to share a little bit of the thinking since I do think that LC's are one of the emerging strategies to address the core dilemma of increasing the quality of student learning in a time of limited resources. It will also give us a better sense of the larger system dynamics in which we are caught.

There's a fairly widespread national consensus emerging about the issues facing us. It's clear that we are on the edge of nearly universal higher education but still operating with an infrastructure and many policies and assumptions that no longer work. As a result, we are caught in a number of paradoxes. This is one reason why we all feel crazy some of the time as we try to pursue education reform.

At our meeting last weekend, Peter Ewell described the current situation in terms of "key dialectics"---seemingly opposing positions, both of which are right and both which must be accommodated. The only way out of the apparent contradictions is a conceptual shift and new institutional structures and ways of doing things.

One of the major conceptual shifts that has been advanced is the move from a teaching to a learning paradigm. While the article by Barr and Tagg that made that argument had the unfortunate effect of polarizing a lot of people, it has a certain resonance with much of the thinking about where we are headed in terms of putting student learning at the center of our work. If you think that form must follow function, it is an important move. Putting learning first helps define what is core and what is periphery in our institutions in terms of promoting student learning. It provides a lens through which to view all of our policies, practices, and structures. And of course we will uncover many contradictions. Our institutions are cluttered with many perverse policies from the standpoint of supporting student learning.

If we are indeed facing nearly universal higher education, which seems indisputable, and a situation in which a college degree is to our society what a high school degree was a 100 years ago, then we have to ask serious questions about what a 21st century degree should look like and how to work more successfully with our students.

Paradoxically, although American higher education is the envy of the world, the level of student achievement and student preparation needs improvement. Yesterday Vince Tinto

mentioned low expectations and there is a huge amount evidence that this is the case. Although nearly 75% of the population goes to college, a recent study showed that only 42% had completed the high school curriculum required to go to college. As a result 40% take remedial courses. Even more alarming, nearly half of those who go to college never graduate. It's also clear that there is a growing mismatch between what we think is important and what employers and parents want. A practical education that prepares students for the workplace is becoming increasingly important. And that is not a simple issue of occupational training but rather a more complex kind of capacity for dealing with a rapidly changing world, what has sometimes been called life long learning. This is why the emphasis on many active learning approaches on unscripted problems is so important. Problem solving skills is way more critical than memorizing specific bits of information that will soon become obsolete.

Yesterday we heard that how people go to college has changed dramatically. In the old days when I went to college, students typically attended the same college for four years. Coherence was clearly defined in the degree. Since most students lived on campus, there was a healthy and natural interchange between the curricular and the co-curricular experience. There was strong sense of community resulting from the residential character of many institutions.

Almost no one attends college that way anymore. Most students now commute and most work, so building a strong sense of academic engagement and community is a challenge. Students have also become much more mobile. A recent study of the 1988 high school graduating class showed that 54% had attended two or more colleges. That number has certainly dramatically increased. Studies of student transfer show that they "swirl" (a term that Maricopa invented, I am told) rather than flow logically from high school to college or from two year to four year institutions. In fact, there is substantial lateral movement across four-year institutions and considerable reverse transfer between two and four- year schools. Distance courses are now starting to further increase the complexity of where students find their education.

At the same time, most colleges have dismantled their requirements in terms of common courses. Fragmentation has become a pervasive feature of the current environment. Now all of this is probably good from the standpoint of providing students with opportunities to individualize their education but it raises serious questions in terms of planning and coherence. **Balancing individualization with coherence is one of the major apparent contradictions in the current environment.**

Many believe that the only way out of this dilemma is by emphasizing learning outcomes which have a portability and coherence beyond a single institution, and by thinking of the student rather than the curriculum or a single institution's program as the central force for coherence. Students, according to this line of reasoning, should be expected to become more responsible, more intentional, and better informed navigators and planners of their education. This calls for a different curriculum and different kinds of support. Advising becomes key. Vehicles like summative student evaluations, cornerstone and capstone courses and projects , and various active learning approaches provide ways for the

student to accomplish this. LC's have become a significant way of to organize courses into more coherent combinations, often also providing the time and space for a good marriage of experiential and content learning. And as everyone said yesterday, they also offer a powerful way to build community into the classroom.

Another key dialetic is around the organizational structure. Ewell calls this **Modular vs. Cross-Cutting Organizational Structures**. We are organized around academic departments which work very well for many purposes, but not well for others. There is growing recognition of the rigidity this builds into our colleges. Many see a need to have more cross cutting organizational structures to accommodate such things as general education, interdisciplinary studies, learning communities, and innovation in general. All of this "other stuff" is constantly at risk and on the margins of most institutions. Most learning communities are caught in this organizational rigidity.

The third contradiction Ewell talks about is the changing faculty role. He calls this the paradox of **Disaggregated vs Integrated Faculty Roles in Instruction**. We have, as was noted yesterday many faculties. Most institutions have barely begun to deal with the status, role, and support issues resulting from this. Furthermore some parts of the faculty role that used to be integrated are now being disaggregated, especially as a result of the use of technology. The technology universities are the best example of this dis-aggregation of faculty roles. Within the four key faculty roles of curricular design, content delivery, mentorship, and assessment, different people are now taking on different parts of what used to be a single integrated role.

The disaggregation of faculty roles can be liberating or fragmenting, good or bad, depending upon what is put in place. It can enhance attention to all aspects of the roles, some of which are currently under-developed, especially advising and assessment. In some institutions deliberately formed teams such as IUPUI are being forged, giving new energy and sophistication to the educational delivery system and taking advantage of too often neglected expertise in the library, in student affairs, in other parts of the institution, and outside in the community. The use of students themselves through various peer leadership models also represents a different way of thinking about instructional roles and expertise. Learning communities have been quick to take advantage of this trend, often developing highly sophisticated roles and relationships that enrich the learning environment and build a larger sense of the community of educators.

Though learning communities are often described as a pedagogy, they are fundamentally a curriculum restructuring approach. They've become pervasive because they are so adaptable to different institutional environments. Where they've had deepest impact, it is because they are a way of addressing some of the key dilemmas we now face. Dating something like this is difficult, but I would say the learning community movement is about fifteen years old. A watershed date is 1984 when the influential report *Involvement in Learning* was published. Recommendation Five called for "every institution of higher education to create learning communities, organized around specific intellectual tasks and themes." Coming on the heels of the significant report , *A Nation at Risk*, the *Involvement in Learning* report was distinguished by its focus on the process rather than the content of

the curriculum, pointing to three critical conditions for excellence: student involvement, high expectations, and assessment and feedback. Active learning and the establishment of learning communities were stressed as two critical arenas for increasing student involvement and responsibility. Vince talked about these key factors yesterday.

While the first LC dates back to the Progressive Era and a small number of learning community programs developed in the 1970's and 80's on both the east and west coast, the effort really gained momentum in the 1990's as a result of the growing national emphasis on undergraduate education. Five efforts were especially notable: First, John Gardner's ambitious thirty year effort to improve the freshman year through his work on student retention and freshman year seminars at the University of South Carolina. Second, Ernest Boyer's and Lee Shulman's work on the Scholarship of Teaching called for a broader definition of faculty work and scholarship as well as a more empirically grounded sense of good practice. This was a blatant attempt to raise the status of teaching. At the same, Pat Cross encouraged teachers to experiment in their own classrooms using classroom assessment and classroom research. Richard Light's work also demonstrated that we all have a lot to learn from our students about their learning, even at Harvard. There were also a number of efforts to bring legitimacy to the teaching enterprise in a disciplinary context. The American Association for Higher Education, the Association for American Colleges and Universities, the League for Innovation in the Community College and the American Association of Community Colleges were all active in promoting the agenda to improve undergraduate education.

So the overall climate for focusing on undergraduate education has been positive in the last fifteen years. This gave the LC reform efforts status and built a network of kindred spirits. There has also been a robust dissemination effort through the leadership of important high education organizations and government and private funding sources that kept the conversation going and provided arenas for finding resources, experimenting, and cross fertilization. All of this gave the reform effort energy, important in sustaining commitments.

The learning community effort is now a very broad and diverse movement, covering everything from simple linked classes to living-learning programs to fully integrated team taught programs. John Gardner's recent national survey of the Freshman Year provides our first data on how widespread the effort is in different types of institutions. As Figure 1* indicates, LC's are widespread in all types of colleges and universities. The learning community effort continues to grow, now touching 400-500 institutions of all shapes and sizes.

[*FIG. DELETED; it is available at: www.brevard.edu/fyc/survey/Curricular/survey.htm; From: Betsy O. Barefoot, John L. Gardner and Randy Swaing. Policy Center on the First Year of College. Brevard College, Brevard NC. (2000).]

There's been a kind of predictable falling out around certain models in different types of institutions because of natural structural compatabilities. As more and more schools have moved to semester system calendars and smaller chunks of credit and students have become more part time, it's become necessary to build learning communities of varying sizes. Faculty load also influences this. Community colleges in general tend to have more ambitious LC's in terms of team teaching and curricular integration. Not surprisingly the Fig model and the Freshman Seminar approach is most pervasive in research universities because it works quite easily with the current distribution system for general education and can be staffed with part time faculty and graduate students. Nonetheless, some of the FIG models are quite sophisticated with substantial use of active learning. A number of research universities such as the University of Washington see LC's as a platform for implementing other reforms in service learning and technology.

Not surprisingly, the quality and scope of learning community effort varies widely. In some institutions, it is only a few linked courses but in others, it includes a substantial portion of the freshmen class, even in very large universities. Many institutions have found that they can be a galvanizing force for change within an institution, empowering people to see their roles and relationships in new ways. In some institutions, learning communities have become a powerful way of building community in the classroom as well as new connections outside the academy.

The creativity that lies behind many learning community designs demonstrates what deep and empowering learning can look like. But, I must also acknowledge, that too many efforts are little more than block registration with little change in the teaching and learning environment. In many institutions the effort operates on the margin re-enforcing old divisions between student and academic affairs or disciplinary divides over remedial and college-level preparation. In many institutions that have had fairly well established learning communities for some time, there is a kind of "settling in" process that is unlikely to move the effort to its full potential. Many excellent efforts have become limited simply because they have become insular and not reached out beyond the early adopters.

As I look over this effort, I've come to the conclusion that the learning community movement is at an important crossroads. To fully realize its potential, we need to take the right next steps and ramp up our expectations. We need to make the right investments in certain strategic areas to sustain and improve our efforts.

Scaling-up innovations is always a challenge. Education reform efforts come and go, and truth be told, most have limited impact. There are several reasons for this: first, mostefforts are piecemeal, and there is an under-investment in faculty development, curriculum reform, and the overall infrastructure needed to support the reform effort. Furthermore, many efforts are not guided by clear goals. Few institutions actively cultivate this essential dialogue about purpose in an on-going way.

As the following table indicates, learning communities have been developed to address a variety of goals and purposes.

Frequently Cited Goals of Learning Communities

Goals for Students	Improve retention, increase student learning and achievement, increase time on task, promote teamwork and active learning, develop student leadership, increase the success rate for under-represented students in certain majors
Goals for Faculty	Promote experimentation, broaden pedagogical repertoire, increase faculty engagement with one another, promote interaction between faculty and students, and between junior and senior faculty
Goals for Curriculum	Increase coherence of general education program, make curriculum more interdisciplinary, infuse skills such as writing and speaking across the curriculum
Goals for Institution	Enhance the quality of undergraduate education, increase the sense of community within the institution. Promote collaboration between faculty and staff., create entry points for study in the major, create coherent linkages for students in a minor
Goals for Community	Increase connection between the academy and the community by building learning communities with service or civic learning components

What do we know about the success of Learning Communities in addressing these goals? The news from the assessment work is positive but limited. There has been an accumulating body of research demonstrating learning community effectiveness, often conducted by individuals who are also active as higher education speakers so their results quickly reached those of us who are practitioners. Alexander Astin's influential work *What Matters in College* provided an important analysis of the factors associated with student learning. It painted a complex picture showing that student learning is influenced by the overall setting as well as many of the uncontrollable features of our institutions – for example, their size and student profile. Both the form and the content of the curriculum clearly mattered. He suggested that the implicit curriculum—the pedagogy, values and culture of a place ---made a difference. Along these same lines, George Kuh's *Involving Colleges* described the power of a "salient ethos that values learning" and the kind of yeasty engagement that can happen in such environments. All of these studies raised the question about how---indeed whether --- these environments could be created in institutions so often organized around different values and practices?

Vince Tinto's influential research confronted this question directly, demonstrating how involvement in learning could be promoted, even on commuter campuses. Looking at three very diverse institutions, freshman interest groups at the UW, coordinated studies at Seattle Central, and clusters at La Guardia Community College, Tinto's research demonstrated that collaborative learning and learning communities could create intense communities of learning. Furthermore, these three examples demonstrated that learning communities could be adapted to very different institutional environments.

Another important study by W. Norton Grubb and his associates focused on teaching and learning in community colleges. Based on firsthand observations of hundreds of classrooms, including many learning communities, this work titled *Honored but Invisible* argued that serious efforts are needed to support good teaching. While they found much to recommend learning communities, the actual implementation they observed was very uneven, often representing a kind of dumbing down of expectations, with narrow combinations of skills courses without context or content courses. Much of the other assessment work on learning communities consists of single institution studies, often through doctoral dissertations.

We know that learning communities are associated with higher student retention, lower withdrawl rates, better rates of degree completion, more time on task, and higher student satisfaction rates, short and long term. A number of studies explore the longer term impact through studies of alumni and/or seniors.

We know that learning communities can be powerful engines for success in critical filter courses that have high rates of student attrition. If I could put them in one place, it would be in the crucial first quarter of the freshman year when the culture and expectations are established about what going to college means. We also know that they are associated with higher rates of student achievement, student intellectual development and learning gains, though the evidence in these most important domains is much harder to come by, simply because the necessary research hasn't been done.

Even more important is the gap in our understanding about what aspects of the learning community environment make a difference in student learning. One study comparing four institutions (one of which was a learning community) in terms of critical thinking found that two features of the teaching and learning environment seemed to be key differences: an emphasis on class discussion and an emphasis on writing and re-writing. This kind of research provides an important yardstick for assessing our efforts. All learning communities are not created equal, and the more we come to understand the particularities of why some have more impact than others in terms of student learning, the more effective we can be.

So what about these other goals? We know that learning communities are a powerful form of faculty development, especially insofar as they include team planning and team teaching. One only has to look at the pervasive privacy of the academy to understand why bringing groups of people together can be so powerful. Significant change can only really happen when faculty see themselves in new ways and when they re-conceive their

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relationships and commitments. Working with colleagues is a key way to accomplish this. At the same time, we actually know very little about the impact of learning communities on faculty that isn't largely antecedotal. This is virgin territory for future research.

When one moves to the larger aspirations of learning communities in terms of goals for the curriculum, or the institution, or the community, we see a real divide in the learning community assessment effort, and how limited the evidence is. This takes us back to the point about the piecemeal nature of many reform efforts and the absence of a larger frame of reference. Many LC's remain fairly narrow "retention efforts" or "orientation to college" initiatives. Good in their own right - but far less than they might be.

What do we know about the success of Learning Communities in addressing these goals? Transformative change efforts require us to go deeper. To further think about this, I'd like you to look at a model from a recent American Council for Education publication by Peter Eckel, M. Green, Barbara Hill and W. Mallon called *On Change III: Taking Charge of Change: A Premier for Colleges and Universities* (1999). It provides a way to think about transformation change.

Continuum of Change

Little depth and pervasiveness		**Great depth and pervasiveness**

Adjustment	**Isolated change or extensive but shallow change**	**Transformational change**

From: *On Change V "Riding the Waves of Change: Insights from Transforming Institutions."* American Council on Education. 2001

The big national studies are talking about a need for transformation models to address the future in higher education. We have some examples, but not enough, of institutions that represent transformational change. On most campuses, the learning community effort is on the periphery, and they remain fragile, but some are moving towards sustainability and transformation.

Reform efforts vary in both depth and pervasiveness. Truly transformational efforts tend to be both pervasive and deep. When we say that an effort is pervasive, that means it is broad and far-reaching within an institution. Transformed campuses are characterized by numerous integrated changes in their culture, structures, policies and practices. Indicators would be changes in pedagogy, changes in the curriculum, and student learning outcomes. Along with these one would see changes in budget priorities, new organizational structures, changes in policies and decision-making structures. Attitudinal and cultural change is an important component often manifesting itself in new interactions and relationships, changes in self-image and rationale.

Alverno College is often cited as the best example of a transformed institution where a whole different notion of student learning around carefully defined, measured abilities was put in place with the entire institution reorganized around this notion. King's College is based on the Alverno approach and represents another transformed institution as does Empire State College and the University of Phoenix. The Evergreen State College is another example of a transformed institution coherently organized from the start around learning communities. Many of these examples are new institutions, far easier to change.

We do have transformative examples of existing institutions as well. Portland State University is a good example of a transformational effort where its learning community program has become a way of articulating a new and robust mission as an urban university and numerous changes have been made to the institution's structures, policies and practices to support this. Wagner College, a small liberal arts college in New York City, is another example of a transformative effort where learning communities have become a key element in their institutional identity and a strategy for addressing a host of different issues. St Lawrence University is an example of a transformative effort that is both a living-learning model, a profound form of curriculum integration and a diversity effort all at once.

At the University of Washington and the University of Oregon LC's have become synonymous with the freshman year with three fourths of the freshman enrolling in learning communities. At the University of Washington learning communities have been used as a platform for implementing many other reforms. While neither of these examples represent deep transformation of the research university culture, they do have enormous reach and institutional support.

Both La Guardia and Skagit Valley Community College are transformative efforts built around re-envisioning their general education programs. Other community colleges such as Grossmont in southern California have made learning communities a key strategy for developing more effective developmental education programs. (This is not meant to imply that these institutions have arrived in some permanent way, because this is an-going business and transformed practices and structures can become reified, ossified, and obsolete over time.) The trick here is to have a clearly defined goal and audience and build an appropriate support system.

I'd like to end by suggesting seven challenges or key arenas if learning communities are to realize their potential. These provide a kind of barometer for assessing our own efforts so I encourage you to do that as I move along. Where is your institution's LC effort in terms of these challenges?

First, The Challenge of Student Learning.
We now know a great deal about student learning. We need to figure out better ways to put this into practice. I think learning communities provide one of the most robust places for this to happen. Because they involve large blocks of time and credit, LC's provide a broad arena for implementing a variety of other powerful pedagogies and promoting what has been termed "deep learning" and "teaching for understanding." Service learning, collaborative learning, writing and the other "across the curriculum" efforts are natural companions. The challenge of improving student learning isn't simply about introducing teachers to a few new "techniques." The relationship between pedagogy and content is much more complicated than that and many of our ideas about this are unexamined and/or based upon misconceptions. It's a much deeper challenge about understanding how people learn, what effective learning environments look like, how modern technologies might impact learning, and how all of this shapes the role of the teacher. There is no shortage of good literature for exploring this. Two excellent resources are John Branford's book *How People Learn* and Lionel's Gardiner's *Redesigning Higher Education for Dramatic Gains in Student Learning.* Other suggestions are in your bibliography.

Second, the crucial role of Faculty and other educators.
Meeting the challenge of student learning goes centrally to the issue of learning community goals and pedagogy, to issues about how we design learning communities, how we recruit and reward our faculty, and how we support faculty development. We also need to re-examine our notions of who is a teacher.

We know that LC's can be a powerful platform for staff and faculty development. At the same time, learning communities across the nation are under-investing in the critical faculty development activities needed, and too many learning communities are little more than co-registration devices, with little or no alteration of the teaching and learning environment. Not surprisingly, these LC's do not show dramatic increases in student achievement.

We are at a critical juncture with the large-scale retirements now facing the academy. In fact, as Finkelstein, Seal and Schuster points out in their recent study of the new faculty of the 1990's, much turnover has already taken place- one third of the total, a growing proportion off the tenure track. This research also suggests that there are not substantial differences in the teaching practices and priorities of the newcomers although the demographics of this new cohort are markedly different from the previous generation. John Gardner corroborates that. His recent study of freshmen students reports that lecturing is the most utilized pedagogical technique and that students say this is their least preferred teaching method. Most would like more experiential education activities.

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With the imminent retirement of much of the nation's faculty, this is a very good time to invest in sustained faculty development and to rethink the ways we support the development of excellent teachers. We need to build systematic programs based upon what we know about student learning. Faculty belief systems remain a critical barrier to implementing new approaches to teaching and learning.

The third challenge is the Challenge of Diversity
This is a multifaceted issue that is partly about who participates in LC's (students and faculty), about what the curriculum is, and also about how the teaching and learning environments are structured. We need to continue to assess our efforts in terms of who they actually serve and whether they are actually serving their intended purpose. We need a much deeper understanding of our curriculum and where students succeed and fail. Many progressive "non-traditional programs" intended to reach under-represented populations turn out to be enclaves for more mainstream students while many students of color are concentrated in low priority, poorly staffed areas of the curriculum. In my opinion, as a national movement, the rhetoric of LC's is far ahead of the reality in terms of seriously addressing the multiple issues of diversity.

We know that LC's can provide a powerful means of serving an increasingly diverse student population. Learning community approaches, properly constituted, can readily address diverse learning styles. They can be used to dramatically increase student retention, especially among our most vulnerable student populations. Some schools have used them strategically to address the very serious retention issues in gateway courses or parts of the curriculum, that are not serving students well. Every school has some of these. Many schools have been emphasizing developmental education since this is an area that is a graveyard for too many students. There are some excellent learning communities explicitly established to support students of color, some around radical collaborations of high schools and colleges or two and four year colleges. Learning communities are also an excellent venue for developing a more multicultural curriculum. We've also learned that they will not necessarily attract students of color without a diverse faculty and a curriculum relevant to their needs. It's very important to begin by closely examining where your students actually are in the curriculum.

The fourth challenge is around technology
For the last several years, there has been much confusion and hyperbole about the role of technology in higher education. Many people were saying that technology would transform us. For some this evoked nightmares, for others utopian dreams. I think it's become very clear now that technology is a pervasive feature of our society. It can be a very positive tool in higher education. With their stress on face to face interaction and community, some think LC's are hostile to technology, but we are now seeing very creative uses of technology in learning communities.

A recent project funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts also demonstrates that technology can be used to both increase quality in terms of student learning and reduce cost. This course redesign project headed by Carol Twigg at RPI is an important story. This is not about using canned courses and distance learning. She has now worked 35 institutions

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focusing on the 25 key large courses that account for more than half of the enrollment in America's colleges. She tells riveting stories of how courses such as Spanish, Algebra, Biology, Chemistry, and Statistics have been redesigned for greater student success. While the story about the uses of technology are important in this project, the more important lesson is about institutions taking structure seriously as a variable they can change. In this respect, this project has much in common with the learning community approach. There's a great sink hole of inefficiency in our institutions that are reflected in courses with high withdrawal and failure rates. These are ready targets for learning community development.

I don't have any ready answers about learning communities and technology but I think those of us in the learning community movement need to take a serious look at the positive opportunities to enhance student learning through the judicious use of technology.

The fifth challenge is around assessment
I've already said some things about assessment and what we know about the impact of learning communities. Now I want to make a pitch for thinking about assessment in a particular way. Assessment should be thought of as an ongoing process and a key element of all learning community planning and implementation. It's everyone's business. It should be happening at multiple levels with multiple approaches. In the classroom, in the planning process before the effort begins, in the reflection process at the end. Assessment should be used to improve the learning community effort as well as to prove that the investment is worthwhile. The first thing skeptics ask is for the numbers; the things that move them are the personal stories like we heard yesterday from the students.

In too many learning communities, assessment is seen as a narrowly defined measurement exercise at the end of the effort rather than a critical opportunity to learn more, communicate with others, and improve the overall effort. Institutions with thriving, far reaching learning community programs such as Temple University and Skagit Valley Community College have used assessment to great advantage as a key tool in building their LC program. The focus of assessment needs to be on the effectiveness of the process of achieving one's goals…This is far more important than the goals or outcomes themselves because it keeps the effort moving. A key element, of course, is maintaining goal alignment and common purpose. Obviously, this must be a collaborative endeavor.

The sixth challenge is around Institutional Change
Eventually all innovations must move from being an *innovation* or an interesting project to being a *reform*. Being a reform requires structural change, reworking roles and relationships, and generally becoming part of the organization with appropriate support and legitimacy. A number of learning communities have successfully done this; many more face this challenge in the future. In many institutions, the learning community effort has become robust precisely because the organizers have been savvy about working with the existing organizational structures and adapting them to their needs. Successful contemporary models have often evolved through a process of working with institutional givens, and carefully cultivating the climate and support systems for institutional change.

There are many ways to think about educational reform. As Hyak and Cuban have pointed out in their interesting book, *Tinkering toward Utopia*, education reform is often characterized by a naïve rhetoric of progress towards utopia and a reality of small incremental changes. This can breed pessimism. Indeed, many learning communities report that faculty are cynical about persistent calls for reforms delivered by a rapidly rotating parade of academic administrators. The emotional dimensions of change efforts are important, especially when the goals are longterm. Change agents need to "keep the hope" if the effort is to survive. We need a kind of pragmatic utopianism that is grounded in what's possible but looking towards higher, more long-term goals.

One of my favorite writers, Parker Palmer, has called for us to organize a movement for education reform with all the organizing savvy that goes with that. He also describes how movements develop ways of rewarding people. In the early stages the rewards come from living one's values, from belonging to a community, and from finding a public voice. As movements mature, a more systematic pattern of alternative rewards (must) emerge along with an integration of the innovation into the existing organization.

We need to think about institutional change in a more comprehensive and long term way. It is not at all unusual for the learning community developmental process to take six or seven or more years to even stabilize in terms of basic operations such as enrollment planning. Thinking in terms of innovation isn't enough if this effort is to have staying power, much less a large impact.

This is an area that needs more serious attention. Across the nation we see persistent weaknesses in terms of leadership structures, resource investments, faculty development, real curriculum integration, and pedagogical change. With the enormous expansion of interest in LC's there has been a loss of focus and quality, and a kind of settling for the lowest common denominator. This is a very difficult arena, especially in light of the high rate of administrative turnover (3-5 years) and the well known tendency for everything to go on hold when a key leader departs. This requires creative solutions to the apparent paradox of finding support that runs against the grain of how we are organized.

Finally, and most important, learning communities face the **challenge of purpose**. Many learning communities begin in a flurry of enthusiasm without clear goals or planning. This is not a bad thing . It's typical of innovations. But if the effort is to last and have a significant impact on an institution, the institution needs to eventually come to a common understanding about why they are doing learning communities and organize appropriately to support them. The question I want to raise about this is whether our vision is large enough? We badly need a serious conversation about educational purpose.

Yesterday Vince argued that we need to get beyond co-registration when we think of LC's. I strongly agree. At no time have the questions "education for what" and "education for whom" been more pressing. At no time has it been more important to look carefully at what we do and be able to document its effectiveness. We need to continue to ask whether there are ways in which the learning community idea can be made even more powerful in terms of student learning and institutional reform. We need to be realistic in

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the ways in which we approach organizational change while still holding onto the kind of idealism that pushes us towards higher goals.

We need to ask ourselves have we gone far enough in terms of actually putting learning community theory into practice? Have we redefined our education systems, our support systems, our core processes, our ways of assessing student learning? Will history look back on this learning community movement as another innovative effort that came and went, or will it look back on this effort as something that opened the door to really profound change in the curriculum and pedagogy of American higher education?

This is tough work, but I've been amazed at the creativity and ingenuity of people like you. I think we've got a good shot at it. The learning community movement is poised to be a major player in the national conversation about putting student learning at the center of the enterprise. Clearly, higher education has changed dramatically. The colleges of the past, our community of memory, no longer exists, but learning communities can provide a community of aspiration that is empowering and meaningful, and transformative in terms of student learning.

Barbara Leigh Smith