Book Review

Lina Dostilio, Editor (2017) *The Community Engagement Professional in Higher Education: A Competency Model for an Emerging Field.* **Boston, MA: Campus Compact.**

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The title, in a way, is the point. A major intention in publishing a book like this is to be able to name those who work in higher education community engagement as *professionals*, with unique skills and knowledge that they bring to their roles. It is to suggest that not only is the phenomenon of higher education community engagement worthy of study, but also that the roles of the people primarily responsible for doing it should be analyzed and given theoretical consideration. As young professionals with a range of academic backgrounds who now work in various capacities that could be described as *higher education community engagement*, we are highly interested in this project. We have each wrestled with our professional identities and welcomed the opportunity to see how fellow practitioner-scholars systematically describe the uniqueness of what it is that we're doing, the challenges we face, and how to envision our professional trajectories. As friends and colleagues, the three of us regularly discuss the nuances of our work, and this book by Dostilio and her colleagues formalizes and deepens the knowledge we have been sharing with one another about our experiences in this developing field.

This publication reflects a growing practical and academic interest in community engagement professionals (CEPs) and responds to several calls for investigation into their roles and functions. It directly answers Welch and Saltmarsh (2013) in their request for further research on the professional pathways and features of the work of community engagement center directors and also broadens the analysis to include those with a variety of titles and roles working in this space. Dostilio and her colleagues share similar goals and build upon the work of McReynolds, Shields, and their colleagues in *Diving Deep in Community Engagement* (2015) which also offers a framework for the knowledge and skills needed by CEPs. While *Diving Deep* intends to be first a tool for practitioners interested in reflection on their professional development, *The CEP in Higher Education* is perhaps first addressed to researchers and leaders concerned with the direction of the field and secondarily to professionals interested in reflection on their own roles and development. This publication grows out of ongoing work with a team of fifteen

research fellows led by Dostilio (2016) and associated with the national Campus Compact Project on the Community Engagement Professional. The goal of the project was to collaboratively develop a competency model based on an extensive review of the literature and refined with practitioner feedback; the book presents the results. Dostilio and Perry describe the review as "an attempt to systematically uncover the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that the literature suggests are necessary to promote the practices of community-campus engagement" (p. 2). In addition to this explicit goal, Dostilio and her colleagues appear to also be laying the groundwork for a credentialing program recently announced by the national Campus Compact and expected to begin in 2018. In reference to the credential on their website (Introducing Campus Compact, 2016), Campus Compact directs those interested in learning more to this publication, and the book provides exactly the type of research needed to help determine the structure and content of such a program. Dostilio does mention discussion about the potential creation of a credential (p. 43) but does not attempt to provide justification for it and rather focuses on developing the theoretical framework for competencies associated with the profession, independent of whether or not they might be utilized in creating a credential.

The first chapter introduces a clear and convincing explanation of the need for this book. The authors define what makes something a profession—a body of knowledge and practice, the development of practice-scholar communities, a shared professional identity, and a shared set of ethical commitments (p. 5). They then detail how CEPs already have each of these elements. Dostilio and Perry elaborate on the shift from *first-generation engagement staff*, whose work may have been more straightforwardly logistical, to *second-generation professionals*, whose roles and responsibilities have shifted as the work has become institutionalized and more complicated. In the second chapter, Dostilio provides an overview of the authors' thorough and rigorous methods with insightful reference to the professionalization of other, related fields. It ends with a useful presentation of the model they developed through their process of

literature review and feedback (Table 2.2, pp. 46-51) that is the primary outcome of the project.

The following chapter focuses on the critical perspectives that generally correspond with the *Critical Commitments* column of their model, interwoven throughout the competencies. The chapter problematizes the concept of competencies and builds a foundational analysis of principles and commitments associated with critical community engagement. These foundations consist of working toward social change, developing critical consciousness, building authentic relationships, being conscious of power within relationships, and disrupting unequal power structures. The fact that the critical perspectives of this chapter are not consistently put into conversation with the following chapters could be seen as a weakness of the book overall.

Each remaining chapter offers one of the literature reviews that the research fellows undertook in the first phase of developing the model. Chapter four corresponds with competencies related to *Administering Community Engagement Programs* and reviews the literature on program administration as well as the evaluation necessary to demonstrate program impact. Chapter five corresponds with the section titled *Leading Change within Higher Education* and lays out several foundational assumptions about the role of community engagement in helping higher education achieve its democratic mission. The authors define what they mean by *change* before jumping into literature on the knowledge, skills, and attributes required for envisioning change, leading change, and enacting change. The assumptions they lay out—such as that "community engagement runs counter to the dominant norms of higher education" (p. 100)—in particular might provide valuable entry points for campus-based discussions as community engagement strategy evolves, since not everyone in higher education, or even all CEPs, may agree with them.

Chapter six corresponds with the second section of the model, *Institutionalizing Community Engagement on a Campus,* and outlines the essential skills, institutional support, and resources needed to embed engagement within colleges and universities. Chapter seven reviews literature related to *Facilitating Students' Civic Learning and Development* in order to highlight a key opportunity for CEPs: seeking to understand *all* the students who participate in community engagement (and not just those from often-assumed positions of privilege) and validate the particularities of diverse experiences. Chapter eight explores *Cultivating High-Quality*

Partnerships and outlines both the theoretical and practical knowledge necessary to create authentic partnerships with strong collaboration, communication, and relationship. The final chapter, corresponding with the section on *Facilitating Faculty Development and Support,* focuses on how to attract, train, and support faculty in their partnerships and professions.

Dostilio and her colleagues have completed an impressively rigorous process, and it would be hard to criticize their conclusions without undergoing a similar one. The idea of building a competency model from published literature in the field with feedback from current practitioners is, however, inherently more descriptive of what has been. Those who argue for a more critical revisioning of the field (Butin, 2007; Mitchell, 2008; Stoeker, 2016) might suggest that this book serves to reify what is rather than provide vision for what could be. Similarly, the authors could be seen to define community engagement too narrowly, as they leave out of their review the literatures of such intimately related fields as social innovation and entrepreneurship education along with the growing role these movements play on campuses, at times even within centers for community engagement. Though this tension is named in the introduction (pp. 17-20), the subsequent literature reviews do not include relevant keywords for social innovation and entrepreneurship, which raises the question of whether the authors would consider social innovation educators as CEPs and who else they might be leaving out. At the same time, this line of critique will arise whenever boundaries are drawn. The authors clearly articulate what they set out to do and, from our reading, appear to do it quite well.

As a whole, this publication should be seen by CEPs more as a resource for exploring the competency model or as an in-depth look at each competency area rather than a book for reading cover to cover. There is a fair amount of redundancy—perhaps inevitable in presenting a series of related literature reviews—and notable lack of conversation between chapters. If you are a CEP simply trying to better understand your job, perhaps read the introduction and the model overview and then dig in as relevant to your specific role. The book is also quite useful as a roadmap for CEPs on what else to read on particular topics, as a thorough introduction to someone transitioning into the field, as a resource for guiding strategic planning or targeted hiring within a center, and as an insight into what might be involved with the new Campus Compact credential.

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