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Chance Encounters, Transformation, and New Beginnings

From the Editor

Dr. Marybeth Lima is the Cliff and Nancy Spanier Alumni Professor at Louisiana State University

I was heading to the American Society for Engineering Education (ASEE) annual meeting, the one I attend almost every year in which I drink out of a fire hose for several days to learn more about what others are doing in this discipline and to be inspired to continue my own work. As an engineer who cares about service learning and community engagement, I often feel lonely within my profession. For the few days of ASEE each year, I feel like part of a larger tribe—there is something energizing about sharing space with engineers who believe that engagement is the key to ensuring that future engineers are humanitarians and not highly skilled barbarians.

I entered the New Orleans airport and as I was checking in for my direct flight to Salt Lake City and ASEE, I felt a hand on my shoulder. When I turned around, I recognized one of my former students, one who had gone on to get a PhD in neuroscience at UCLA and was now engaged in full-time research. He and his family live in Salt Lake City and had just finished visiting extended family in Louisiana. We sat together at the gate and I asked about his quest to change careers; Jeremy had contacted me a few months earlier about leaving research and entering full-time, K–12 teaching.

We were discussing ideas when the woman sitting next to me looked up from her book and said, “Excuse me for eavesdropping, but I couldn’t help overhearing your conversation. She looked at Jeremy and continued, “I’m Mandy, nice to meet you. I am the national teacher of the year, and I want you to know that we need you. If you are even thinking about teaching, please go for it. We need people who care about students in the classroom, and it is clear that you care.” The three of us went on to talk about ways to be effective in the classroom and the transformative ways that teaching and mentoring lift not only the students, but ourselves as well. “Always put students first,” Mandy declared, “and listen to their stories.”

I am so appreciative of unexpected, unscripted situations like these, which, upon reflection, leave me

amazed at how small the world really is. (What are the chances that I’d randomly sit down next to the National Teacher of the Year? What are the chances that I’d run into a former student I taught almost 20 years ago who lives in a city I happen to be traveling to for a conference on teaching, or the chances that this student is working toward becoming a teacher himself?) I am equally amazed at how the same themes about education—valuing students, listening to stories, transforming lives and communities—continue to resonate. Mandy teaches high school English and math to students who come to her classroom from other countries, and in so doing, is “on the front lines” of one of the critical societal and moral issues of our time (<http://neatoday.org/2018/04/23/2018-national-teacher-of-the-year-mandy-manning/>).

I am honored to be the new editor of *JCES*. I feel like an unlikely editor—it certainly wasn’t a career goal. What drew me to *JCES*, though, and what continues to draw and inspire me, are the stories that are told in the pages of this journal. Like the ASEE conference, reading *JCES* connects me to a larger tribe of people who care deeply about the world being a safe, just place—one community at a time. Like Mandy Manning and her teaching philosophy, reading the pages of *JCES* enables me to “listen” (through reading) to stories, including those of students, community partners, faculty, and communities. As editor, I plan to continue to facilitate the telling of stories that have yet to be shared.

I am so thankful to University of Idaho Professor Emeritus of Natural Resources and Society Nick Sanyal, the outgoing editor of *JCES*, for showing me the ropes when I began the associate editor position and for his sage advice about becoming editor. Nick is a consummate professional who took special care to demystify the publication process for new authors. He has provided thoughtful leadership as editor, which has enabled *JCES* to publish work that offers insightful perspectives on civic engagement. I will miss him. At the same time, I look forward to working

with Drew Pearl, who has just assumed the associate editor position at *JCES*. Drew is the Director of Academic Engagement at the University of North Georgia. He is an accomplished engaged scholar and colleague. *JCES* has already benefited greatly from his insights and expertise, and I couldn't be more excited to continue to work with him.

The articles in this issue of *JCES* tell stories: of a new perspective to gain insight on the effectiveness and nuances of long-term, town/gown relationships; of high school student civic engagement with respect to the great recession of 2008; of a new framework for ensuring community/university partnerships that are equitable; of the role that service learning has in enhancing the global citizenship skills of high school students; and of a service-learning mentoring program focused on leadership development that uses a virtual component to ameliorate geographical and resources issues. Articles contributed to the "Student Voices" section of the *Journal* include reflective insights on sexual violence and assault, as well as a program to enhance community access to swimming. Three book reviews provide information on recent publications involving future ways in which higher education can effectively engage with communities; the importance of public scholarship and "making it count" in the academy; and the use of deliberative pedagogy and how it can be used to address critical societal issues.

I encourage you to read and enjoy the stories and perspectives shared in this issue. I also encourage you to submit your insightful work to *JCES*. Manuscript preparation information begins on page 74. I look forward to reading your stories.