

Portland State University

PDXScholar

Public Administration Faculty Publications and Presentations

Public Administration

9-2013

Fits and Starts: Visions for the Community Engaged University

Kevin Kecskes

Portland State University, kecskesk@pdx.edu

Kevin Foster

University of Texas

Follow this and additional works at: https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/pubadmin_fac



Part of the [Public Administration Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Citation Details

Kecskes, K., & Foster, K. M. (2013). Fits and starts: Visions for the community engaged university. *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship*, 6(1), 102-113.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in Public Administration Faculty Publications and Presentations by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. Please contact us if we can make this document more accessible: pdxscholar@pdx.edu.

Fits and Starts: Visions for the Community Engaged University

Kevin Kecskes and Kevin Michael Foster

Dr. Kecskes

Good Morning. So, here we are in Alabama. You've all been here a few days. I just got here last night. And I'm again shocked. Eight o'clock in the morning and all of you had all these options and here you are.

Now, I know it was the breakfast that probably pulled you in. But anyway, thank you for coming. Let's acknowledge the folks here at the University of Alabama for their great work [applause]. Thank you so much. Special thanks go to Dr. [Samory] Pruitt, Dr. Heather Pleasants and Dr. Ed Mullins for organizing us and working with us over the past several months and working together.

I'm now working with a new colleague half way across the country and we're up to the challenge and we hope you are too. So, we hope you'll come along with us on a journey today.

Could you give me a show of hands if you are currently associated with the University of Alabama? OK, excellent, a good bit of you. Something funny happened last night when we were coming in from the airport. The very kind shuttle driver kept very quiet. Kevin and I were just getting to know each other. Finally, I leaned forward and I touched him on his shoulder and said, "Excuse me, Sir. How are you doing?" As he's driving down the highway, he said, "I'm doing fine. Is there something I can help you with?" I said, "Yes, we're going to the University of Alabama, right?" And he said, "Yes, Sir. We are." I said, "You have a football team, right?" Now that poor man almost swerved off the road. So I said to him, "Now you all are doing pretty well this year?" "Yes, Sir. We're number one. We're ranked number one in the country," he said. "Congratulations to you." And then asked, "Sir, do you know who's ranked number two in the country? And he said, "Awe, why would I know that?" then he said, "Wait a minute. Wait a minute. It's the Ducks, the Oregon Ducks." I said, "That right," and added "Sir, I'm from Oregon." And he looked at me; he looked at me again. I thought he was going to stop that van!

I know we have some friends here from Oregon State. I don't think we have anybody here from the University of Oregon. But I'm from another university in Oregon. Right there in our state's major city, from Portland State University.

So, I want to acknowledge and congratulate the folks here from Alabama for having such a good football team.

We all know that the only thing that's more important than football on a college campus is community engagement. And that's why we're here, right? That's right [applause].

All right. So, as Heather said, I am Kevin Kecskes and I'm at Portland State. I'm pleased to be here with you this morning and now I'm going to turn it over to Dr. Kevin Foster.

Dr. Foster

So to start out, to give you a sense of where we're going this morning, here's a little bit of a roadmap. We're hoping to have some good conversation that takes us from the conceptual to the theoretical, to the practical. As many of us know if we're reading JCES, if we're engaged in this work for some period of time, there's a number of different ways to think about community engagement. For the purposes of our talk, there's a number of ways to think about and talk about institutional change.

We're privileging the conceptions and the ideas that we've worked on over the years, but also fully acknowledging that there's a lot of different ways to look at change and to look at engagement. So, we'll start out with some models of community engagement. We'll present an idea of a continuum of change that we hope will be useful when you think about working in the context of institutions, working in the context of complex structures, how you begin to be specific and purposeful about moving the needle in terms of creating space for community engagement on your campus or in your social network. We'll move to some examples.

Dr. Kecskes is senior colleague. So he wins this one. But if it I were my class or if I were preaching in church, there would be no back-row Joes, right? I would tell everybody in the back to move to the front and make it more intimate. But Kevin reminded me that folks are eating, folks are waking up and folks are going to be coming and going, so it's ok of you to remain seated where you are, this time!

So, as we are creating our space I'll ask or request of us that we be vigilant about the

sacredness of any community or any space that we set up and that even as you might be in the far back, and even as it becomes enticing as things get good sometimes. Do you ever want to turn to a neighbor, “You know I really agree with that” or “Man, Kev sucks” and I don’t say which Kev we’re talking about, right? So, one of us isn’t any good and you want to turn to a neighbor and say that. So, this is a space that will probably work well for us. But I’ll also ask us to guard the sacredness of this space in terms of our engagement over the course of the next hour or so. Back to Kevin.

Dr. Kecskes

Our friends at the University of Alabama call us the Kevin and Kevin show, in case you haven’t figured it out yet. And we’ve never done this, so at the end you can let us know how it went. I was just doing some last minute reading about community engagement on the plane and I just stopped and closed my book and sat back for a second. I was again shocked by the magnitude, the magnitude of the opportunity that we have here in front of us as members of post-secondary institutions. The magnitude. There are over 4,200 degree-granting institutions in this county alone. In the aggregate we employ more than 3 million people. There are over 18 million students that attend our colleges and universities. And in 2006, in the aggregate post-secondary institutions spent over \$373 billion in goods and services. We are an important engine in our communities. We have been here a long time and unlike companies that go off shore and move all over the place, we’re not going anywhere. Last time I looked these buildings are pretty solid. It’s an unbelievable responsibility in front of us. So, we are faced with this magnitude of opportunity. There’s another thing that we’re faced with: Magnitude of inertia, because our institutions are traditional. The role of tradition it to hold the line to let change happen slowly, and there’s a really good role for that.

To help us remember something Clark Kerr, famous president of the University of California Berkeley, said 40 years ago, a real maverick himself in 1963: “The University has become more of a bureaucracy than a community, a mechanism held together by administrative rules and powered by money, a series of individual faculty entrepreneurs held together by a common grievance over parking.” Now you can go to the University of California at Berkeley, and you can see there’s a Clark Kerr Campus and he’s a famous man. This is kind of his summary reflections on a great life in

higher education.

So the first thing we want to talk about regarding the models of engagement that we can acknowledge, as we have written here [points to the slide], public relations. Public relations are important. I am assuming everybody in this room knows what that is and why they’re important. I support that. For 10 years, working in the provost’s office at Portland State University, part of what I did was tell our story, and it’s very important. I think that’s where maybe we can start the day, but it’s certainly not where we want to end the day.

Dr. Foster

Our next model of community engagement practiced increasingly is the neoliberal. When we say neoliberal, we are not talking liberal vs. conservative in the contemporary sense. We are talking neoliberal as the revitalization of 19th century liberalism that in the 21st century is what we see in many universities as an increasing bent toward efficiency, effectiveness, partnerships that are in some ways dynamic but can also be, uh, uh, all right, soul-sucking. What I mean by that is that we can do amazing things when we say, you know, we don’t have enough money to build this lab. So let’s go down the street and partner with someone, IBM or whoever, and we can create some new after-school programs, we can create a facility for joint use, or other things that we can do that are efficient and effective that are anything but soul-sucking – they’re exciting and dynamic. But at some point our risk with the neoliberal model is that all we care about is efficiency. And we are not as directly purposeful in terms of our original vision for why we reach out to folks and why we enter into community with folks. We end up tending toward, “Well, this is really a great thing to do and we really can do it” and no one asks, really, why or whether it’s a good thing. But it’s economically prudent, so we do it. So one model of community engagement that has some promise, but also some peril attached, is the neoliberal.

Dr. Kecskes

I want to remind us that today is an important day. Something important is going to happen tonight. And that is our two presidential candidates are going to debate. I assume many of you are going to watch. I certainly am going to try to watch as much of that as I can around the other commitments I have tonight. It reminds me again that this work is “small p” political. Change is political work. And so there are two ways to work

that. We can deny that and run away from that, or we can run into it and embrace it. I do the latter. I lean into it and embrace it. It is absolutely small “p” political work.

And to that end, I want to tell a story about my friend Dick Harmon. Dick Harmon is a senior man. He is a very accomplished man. He’s worked all over the United States and Canada with the Industrial Areas Foundation, which is a community organizing group started by Saul Alinsky in Chicago. Dick Harmon is now in his mid-70s. He and I became friends about 10 years ago, and we talked about how community organizing could work in post-secondary education. One of the things I did in my role as associate vice provost for engagement is we held these civic engagement breakfasts. We would get somewhere between two- and three-hundred people from Portland State and Portland to come to these breakfasts a couple or three times a year, and I said, “Dick, would you come and be one of our two or three main speakers, and you’ll be the first” because I always try to get someone from the community to come and talk. And he said, “Kevin, I’m reluctant.” Anyway, I talked him into coming. So the room was pretty full, over three hundred people in the room, several deans, I think our provost was in the room also. I introduced Dick. I was very happy because my style is to organize things and then get out of the way.

Dick got up. I thought he was going to talk about community organizing, the three rules that organizers live by, things like this. He got up and he went up front and he stood in front of everybody and he looked at me and he said, “Kevin, I’m sorry. I think I’m going to say something right now that’s going to upset you and actually I hope I upset some of you in this room.” He said, “Higher education, higher [more emphasis] education. Does that mean that there’s a lower education?” And he went on to challenge everybody in that room. He said, “Who do you really think you are? Who do you really think you are? I’m a community partner and I’ve been invited to come into your university here in these hallowed walls and I’m intimidated, because this is “higher” education. And I’m intimidated. I’m a man in my mid-70s and I’ve had a long and rich and successful career, several books.” He’s led several changes, and yet he said, “I’m intimidated in these walls, this work, the way we’ve set up this whole dynamic. Community partners, we come here, we’re supposed to kind of ask you for your resources. It’s all wrong! It’s all wrong.”

And then Dick went on to talk about a different

kind of way that’s less wrong, about acknowledging each other’s wisdom and knowledge in the room, about finding a new way, about understanding that when we’re doing research, or teaching, there’s multiple sources of wisdom and knowledge everywhere. I sat there thinking, “Oh, no.” But by the end of that hour and a half breakfast I tell you, people loved Dick. They gave him a standing ovation. People wanted him to talk to their classes and engage in partnerships with him, and he said, “Oh, no, I’m on my way out.”

I wanted to tell that story because that hit me, that was five or six years ago, and in a very, very profound way, when I’m working with community partners and when all of us are working with community partners that in fact if we’re trying to facilitate positive change, there are a couple things to keep in mind: It’s political work, and whether we acknowledge it, understand it, or like it, we’re coming from a position of unbelievable power, simply because we are associated with the university. There are many, many ways to break through those walls, but we have to break through those walls. And so we’re going to talk about some of those strategies right now.

Dr. Foster

One aspect of the work is the reality of change, the reality that where many of us hope for our institutions to be is not where they are today and certainly not where they were yesterday. How do we push forward? For many of us it’s a rough journey. If you come from a radical edge, if you are a person whose background marks you as from a marginalized population, if you are among the many folks who enter the academy not with the privilege of knowledge for knowledge sake – which is a beautiful thing – but many of us don’t feel a privilege of knowledge for knowledge sake. We got into it because the world wasn’t good enough. At some point we said, or felt in our hearts, felt in our bones, that the university might be a really good place to work. One of the things Bill Ayers, an elementary education theorist and activist, said was that the university is your base of operations, it’s your home, and from there you hope to go out and do great things. One of the open secrets of the academy – remember how many of us talked about teaching, research and service? We get to divide that into thirds? This is going to be great! – And then what happens when you step onto a campus if you happen to be a junior faculty member? Research, teach competently so you don’t embarrass us, and service, not so much. We have to make choices,

because some of us are teachers in terms of our backgrounds. And someone has the audacity to get up in our faces and say, “Yeah, you’re hired but if you want to be here in five years, don’t spend so much time trying to be a great teacher.” And certainly don’t spend so much time trying to serve, or be a servant, or even be a servant leader. For me the journey of thinking about a continuum of change has been very personal because I’ve had to figure out how I’m going to make it in the academy.

Much of my work is based on the work of my mentor Edmund T. Gordon, chair of the new African and African Diaspora Studies Department at UT-Austin, first as a graduate student about 20 years ago, then I went off and did my own thing. Now I’ve come back to the University of Texas as we are launching this new department. One of the starting points of this idea of contextual interventions is that you see that things aren’t good enough yet and you want to be a part of them being better and you’re trying to engage, but you don’t have the possibility or power yet to fully transform the space. So your work ends up being contextual. You intervene in a context, in a moment, to survive the day. If, for instance, I’m committed to the idea of being an engaged scholar, I work to create space for myself to do that work we’ll call “a contextual intervention.” It will be something where I go out and find a way to take my community engaged work and have it nicely articulate with research, so that I’m going to get publications from my community engaged work. That’s a contextual intervention. That is to say, it’s an intervention in the moment, a solution that helps me survive the day, but does nothing to change the structures of power. In fact, it ends up being complicit with or supportive of the structures of power as they already exist. This making sense at all? All right, I’ll give you a K-12 teaching example.

In the K-12 classroom, in many of our schools, an issue is hunger. The teacher does not have the capacity to solve hunger. But the teacher does have to survive the school day and she does know that her middle-schoolers, especially the three boys over there that are 13 years old and 5’ 11” they are growing and they’re big, and every day at 2 o’clock they’re hungry. This is her fourth year of teaching, so she knows that every day at this time she’s going to have hungry kids. There are health laws that says you can’t take food out of the cafeteria, and there’s a principal’s rule that you can’t have food in the classroom. We haven’t built it into the day. Her contextual intervention is that she has

a desk drawer. And what’s in that desk drawer? Granola bars, some little treats, some little fruit snacks. She says, “Lamar, come over here. Johnny, come over here,” and she slips them some food. That’s a contextual intervention. It did nothing to change the structures of power, it did nothing to ameliorate a big societal problem, but it helped her run an effective classroom at 2 p.m. when her boys and girls are hungry.

At some point we can get to structural interventions, where contextual interventions begin to accumulate and we begin to think more systematically. What if, as a faculty member, the contextual intervention for the community engaged scholar was to begin to think creatively about ways to survive the moment and to move toward your tenure track by articulating your research agenda with your service agenda so that you can publish? And that was your contextual intervention. But you start to think about ways to systematize that. You start to think about ways to facilitate this possibility but for other like-minded folks. You find a chair who’s sympathetic, who’s willing to start to open the door a little bit wider. You start to think in terms of how a department at the level of executive committee can start to think about policy changes that will facilitate community-engaged scholarship. Now you’re starting to think in term of structures of power and how you can engage with others to begin to tweak the rules, change the practices. These are structural interventions.

A structural intervention in our parallel track example would be if I as a teacher who notices hunger, I get with other parents. They say “I know my son or daughter is miserable. Right when I pick them up they’re starving. We have to race home, and they’re incredibly moody, and they’re moody because they’re hungry, so I’m with you on this problem, what can we do.” Well, there’s a church across the street. Why don’t we start doing spaghetti dinners however many nights a week? Or why don’t we talk to the principal about a policy change? By the way, when it comes to contextual interventions, there can also be a resistant edge and I really like the resistant edge. While a contextual intervention can be an intervention that goes and flows with the rules, there can also be a humanizing contextual intervention that has a note of resistance, in other words saying we’re not satisfied with any structures of power that allow inequities, or that allow, for instance, hunger. So a contextual intervention with a resistant edge might be the teacher saying, “It’s wasteful that we throw

out milk cartons at the end of a lunch period if you haven't finished your milk. Put it in your backpack. We're going to drink it later." Now what you've done is broken rules. What you've done is maybe set yourself up for being written up and eventually fired. But what you've also done is humanize the child and allowed them to exist with the notion that their fundamental, basic nutritional needs are more important than somebody's stupid rules. And that's an important lesson for children, especially marginalized children who are pushed off the edge. It might even be an important lesson for assistant professors who got in it to change the world but are told everyday to soften up the rough edges. At some point we need to claim our humanity, claim the vision of what we want to do, and fight for what we want to do. Our contextual interventions might sometimes have a resistant edge. By the way, if you're going to engage any of this stuff, at the end of the day you better be better than all your colleagues when it comes to how much you publish. You better be better than all your colleagues in terms of how much money you accumulate in grants, if that's the metric. If you're going to engage this work this way and persist to where Kevin is (or Kevin was until he moved back to faculty from the provost's office), you better be better than the next. Right? That's Grandma's wisdom, by the way.

Contextual interventions, structural interventions, what do we hope for? What we hope for is structural transformation [glances at the slide]. How often does structural transformation come about? Not very often. Last I checked there are still plenty of kids who are hungry. But we're always about the win, we're also about working toward something, but it's also about the righteousness of the fight and always battling to make it better. Maybe we get to the point of structural transformation but there's righteousness in the journey, so we stay on that path but what we want is the end of world hunger – right? – to put it in a kind of silly or crass way.

What we want at a University of Texas, a Portland State, a University of Alabama is where it's porous, where the walls come tumbling down, in a sense, and there's this nice seamless integration, so that those who pay their taxes in this state, those who are working in this state, benefit from what this university has to offer and the back and forth is this nice flow. I don't know, I haven't been here too long, but at least at the University of Texas I can tell you we ain't there yet. But I persist at the University of Texas because the fight is righteous,

because everyday that I live in righteousness – I don't mean to sound so preacherly – but everyday you live in this, you are not living on the other side of the fence, and at some point it does become almost a Manichean duality where it's like are you right or you're wrong and you wake up in the morning and you go to bed at night and you know whether you did right or you did wrong. The beauty of this work is that you can go to bed tired, you might go to bed with tears on your pillow, but when you go to bed you actually rest easy, because you know that you're doing what you need to do. This is all about being purposeful on that journey and setting yourself up in a way to continue on that journey without losing your mind, a way to continue on this journey with a solid sense of where you're trying to go.

Dr. Kecskes

I'm going to talk about traditional vs. engaged scholarship. But before I do, I want to share another little story. The quick background on this story is this: In case you didn't know, or in case you had a sense of it but didn't know how much, this work, this engagement work in postsecondary education, is on fire on a global level. This is not just happening here in the South. It's not just happening in America. It is happening on a global level. Guaranteed. It's unbelievable what's happening, and guess where it's really happening a lot right now? In the Arab world.

Four or five years ago some colleagues from the Gerhart Center for Philanthropy and Civic Engagement in Cairo contacted to do a training with faculty and administrators in the Middle East for a week. I said, "No way. No way. Where will the training be?" "It's going to be in Beirut." "No Way. Thank you. No thank you."

They contacted me a third time and I said, "OK. I will seriously consider coming because you have been so persistent but only if you find a female co-equal presenter to work with me for this week who's from the Arab world." They got back with me a few days later, and so my colleague Amani Elshimi and I led this workshop.

The training was organized by a new alliance called the Ma'an Arab University Alliance for Civic Engagement which is connected to the Tallores Network, an international association housed by Tufts University. There were about 65 people there in Beirut for a week who had gathered together, as Amani and I were together to plan this weeklong workshop. But I said to her, "Look, I don't even speak Arabic. I am not a Middle

Eastern specialist. I feel uncomfortable in this role. First and foremost, before we do anything, I'd like to just find out where people are. Let's just start with a simple thing. Let's just ask them, 'What is community for you, in your context?'" We North Americans, including me, generally don't have a complete sense about the Arab World. There are 22 countries in the Arab world; it spreads from North Africa all the way East to the Persian Gulf. It's an enormous slice of our earth, with great diversity. "Let's just ask people in their context, 'What is community?'" I suggested to Amani and she agreed.

Guess how long it took to answer that question? Two days. That was great, and from a training standpoint, it was fantastic. The group came to a deep, collective understanding, a sense within themselves, of what community is in their individual contexts and collectively. Very interesting work. Unbelievably, interesting work. We wrote some of this up and presented it a couple of years back. Then Amani and I started asking them about their own stories of community engagement. The take-away that really hit me hard as a professional in this field is how they spoke about their students working out in communities in generations-old struggles or how their students protested in the local streets and that for some of them that was community engagement. Those faculty spoke about trying to make a better life; they were trying to do some of the things that Kevin is talking about in terms of structural transformation. They spoke about how some of their students had been injured, or taken to prison, or even killed. It hit me hard that day – I had to hold onto the side of the table. Unlike my experience here in America Now I wasn't in the South 40 years ago in the struggles for civil rights. But it hit me hard that day – this was now three or four years ago – that in their message and experiences were a harbinger of things to come for the Arab Spring; that for them, in some cases, community engagement could mean confronting serious social injustice, and in the extreme could even be a life and death situation.

That's simply not my experience here in America, with service-learning, for example. That's just not my experience, and so it really made me begin to think in a new and deeper way about how important, impactful, powerful this work is. And yet here in a North American context we situate this work in the "safe" traditions of our hallowed postsecondary institutions, which I love. So, this is hard work; now, on to community-engaged scholarship.

Some of you might have seen versions of Table 1, which we have modified from the original by Dr. Andrew Furco (2006) at the University of Minnesota.

This side-by-side conceptual comparison table is quite useful. The point of this slide is this: Many of you have heard or will hear people say something like "This community engaged scholarship is it's not rigorous. I don't know what it is. It seems so fluffy. But if we take a look we see that traditional scholarship breaks new ground. We all know what it is. We all know how important that is. We have traditional journals that support it. We have chairs in departments that value it. We value it ourselves. It is how we progress. It's how we make new knowledge. In an engaged paradigm, however, we have to break new ground in the discipline and have direct application in a broader public issues. The bar is higher, not lower. Not only does it have to meet all the rigors of traditional scholarship, but it has to meet an additional value propositions. It has to have applicable value at some level. Second thing, it answers significant questions in the discipline that have to be relevant to community or public issues. It's a higher bar. Third, it's reviewed and validated by qualified peers in the discipline and the community. That's a really scary place. Theoretically grounded and practically applicable. And finally it advances disciplinary knowledge and public knowledge.

So, I've been hearing for many years as many of you have, "Yeah, but it's not rigorous, it's soft." I don't buy it. Because I do it. And it's hard. It's really hard work. Last thing I'll say about this and I'll pass it back to Kevin is this: An old paradigm is much more linear. In fact if we want to take it to its end, we sometimes think we know the answers to the questions or we launch out to look for the answers to the questions that we think we already have when conducting research. And that is so different from an emergent model where, rather than going out into the community with our questions in mind and our answers in mind, we work with community members in a much more iterative manner; it's much messier milieu in which the questions emerge over time. It takes longer, it's harder work. We can ask ourselves and our community partners, however we define them, the extent to which they involved in question generation, methodology choice, data gathering, data analysis, and dissemination. I'm not here to tell you what's the right answer, but I am here to ask myself first and foremost and you also: How do those processes work for you? Who develops

Table 1. Traditional and Engaged Scholarship Comparison

Traditional	Engaged
<ul style="list-style-type: none">— Breaks new ground in the discipline.— Answers significant questions in the discipline.— Is reviewed and validated by qualified peers in the discipline.— Theoretically grounded.— Advances disciplinary knowledge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">— Breaks new ground in the discipline <i>and</i> has direct application to broader public issues.— Answers significant questions in the discipline <i>relevant to public or community issues</i>.— Is reviewed and validated by qualified peers in the discipline <i>and</i> the community.— Theoretically grounded <i>and</i> practically applicable.— Advances disciplinary knowledge <i>and</i> public knowledge.

the questions? Is it you in your office, alone with the door closed? How do we gather the data, who helps, who has a hand in it, who has a hand in the analysis? And finally, who leads and assists in the dissemination? These are really important questions. I'll just end this little piece by saying from my own personal experiences, engaged scholarship is a lot harder, a lot more work.

We're moving now toward the final part of our remarks. What Kevin and I would like to do is share some examples, first from Portland State and then from the University of Texas at Austin, and then end with a short video clip in which we'll give you a small slice of what engaged teaching and scholarship can look like, and a little surprise at the end.

Two pieces I'd like to talk about at Portland State, institutional transformation and capstones. Now, when Kevin and I were discussing our remarks today, he said, "Kevin, Portland State is an example of structural transformation," as he described. I said, "Well, tell me more about that." Because I am a little too close, I'm not sure that he's got me completely convinced, but I will say there are two things we do at Portland State that I'm very proud of and that I think are emblematic of a deep kind of change in postsecondary education similar to the deep change Kevin spoke about. Number one: in 1996, PSU was one of the first institutions in the country to do this, in the vanguard of a new wave of action – we changed our promotion and tenure guidelines to directly support engaged scholarship. Show of hands if you've been working

in the last five years on changing your institution's promotion and tenure guidelines. Yeah, is that fun? [Laughs] It's creative work, right? It can be creative work. It's hard work. It is political work, small "p". In 1996, Portland State University stepped back because we wanted to be an engaged institution before we were even using that language and to honor our motto that our students gave our then-President Judith Ramaley, "Let knowledge serve the city." Well, if you want to let knowledge serve the city, you need to let it show up where it counts, in the promotion and tenure guidelines. You'd be surprised how many calls I get saying, "We want to come out to Portland State and see how you changed your promotion and tenure guidelines, because we're trying to do that at our university. We want to come out, send a whole team to visit you." And I say, "I'll tell you what. We can save you some money because there is nothing here to see. You can go on the website, go to the Provost's page. You can look at Section 5. We called it then the "Scholarship of Outreach." That was the language that was used in the mid 1990s, thanks in large part to Ernest Lynton and Amy Driscoll. We have examples for artists, which are very different from that for natural scientists, which is very different from social scientists. We have examples." And they say, "But we want to come out and see how you did it." How we did it was about us, PSU's process. How you will do it is really what's most important. Now if you'd like, we can have a chat about some processes, maybe thinking about who you want around the table

talking about some change in leadership strategies that might expedite the process. But at the end of the day, it's hard work, it is very contextualized to the local level; it's about you.

So we did it. I'll tell you just a small vignette here. It wasn't pretty, and it hasn't been pretty, and here's part of why it hasn't been elegant. For 100 people in the room there were a 100 different interpretations of what was said. Also there are institutional promotion and tenure guidelines, and those sometimes translate directly down to departments and disciplines and sometimes they don't articulate at all, and that's a real problem for our junior faculty. Here's another problem. Some faculty said, "Well, I've been doing all this service, and I've been letting knowledge serve the city, and I've been working with these community partners and I've got my students involved, and I'm a really effective teacher. Take a look at my reviews. I've been working with these community partners. We did all these brochures and these websites. Look at how my community partners have increased their funding, and so on." While everything that faculty member said may have been true it didn't meet the key measures of what we as an Academy would hold as rigorous scholarship. That faculty member didn't get it, wasn't advised properly, and when they came up for tenure, they were denied. And so that sent shock waves through our faculty. "Oh, well, it's all rhetoric, it's all rhetoric," some faculty said. Institutionally, we got stalled; we were confused. So, it's hard work.

That was number one, now the second of two examples of PSU's structural transformation. I'd like to talk about our Capstone Program. At Portland State University what we did in the early nineties is we completely changed the entire undergraduate general education program. I'm not going into that whole story but the essence of it is our then-provost was a historian of education, and he said, "We're good at one thing for sure as a university community; we're good at research." So he pulled together some of the best researchers on our faculty at the time and charged them to do research and to prove to him that the current general education distribution model that PSU, and nearly all campuses nationally, had for general education works. They went and did the research and came back and said, "We can't prove it to you, the distribution model basically doesn't work." In fact the research that's been out now for 20 or 30 years by people like Peter Ewell [Vice President at the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems] and many others, many of

you in the room, for sure, say this kind of curricular distribution model doesn't work very well for students. So the provost charged the faculty a second time for a second year to create something they felt would work, based on evidence. Using the research that we had in the early nineties, the faculty team then built what's now known as our University Studies program, which has integrated today about seven of AACU's [Association of American Colleges and Universities] 10 High Impact practices, especially those that have to do with engaged learning. Service-learning is one of the proven practices, first-year seminars, community-based research, and so on. If you don't know about those High Impact practices based on really ground-breaking research by George Kuh [High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access To Them, and Why They Matter], I encourage you to take a look at those because they align quite well with this work. They are all evidence-based practices; they are powerful; they work!

One of the things we have at Portland State at the end of our undergraduate program is a required six-credit, interdisciplinary Capstone course. Each capstone is team-based and community-based. Every undergraduate has to take one to graduate. Here are a couple of pieces of the Capstone. The first year that my predecessor, Amy Driscoll, developed Capstones PSU came out of the box with five of them. The concern at that time was that there would not be enough personnel to fully support these five Capstones. Each Capstone has a maximum of 15 people and they're all theme based. So for example, a capstone could be just about anything that has to do with community. Students come together from multiple disciplines. They work together, ideally over two terms, and bring diverse disciplinary points of view to bear to try to address a salient community issue.

That was almost 20 years ago. Today, that program persists, and last academic year we 234 Capstones were offered, 234! Almost 4,000 of our seniors and some juniors took a community-based Capstone. This Capstone experience is now part of who we are. Our faculty in the Capstone Program are some of our best teachers on campus and in the last five years we have spread that work internationally. For example, I taught a Capstone in Oaxaca, Mexico where we worked on community health issues. Those are two examples of how a university can step back and make good on this idea of structural transformation.

Dr. Foster

I've learned about Portland State from afar, and it's been really exciting to hear. The University of Texas is hard to move. It's so big. Some of our other institutions are so much more nimble. I look to Portland State and hearing Kev, there's just amazing stuff going on there. For me, a faculty member at the University of Texas at Austin, the immediate intervention was to start to think through, from a conceptual standpoint, how to bring research and service together. But then there was also the teaching piece and there was also the reality that I'm committed to my graduate students emerging as a certain type of scholar. I want them to be rigorous from a methodological standpoint. I want them to be rigorous in terms of their theoretical grounding, but I also desperately want them to be deeply community engaged, to their core. This is who they are as emerging scholars. The structural intervention that came was the creation of ICUSP, which is the Institute for Community University and School Partnerships. I was told not to do this, strongly encouraged not to start this. The long story short is that ICUSP became COBRA. These were some of the programs that we had over time and each one has its own back story. COBRA is the Community of Brothers and Revolutionary Alliance. COBRA was started because I was hanging out in community and there was this thing called African American Men and Boys Conference that happened once a month. We came together and we did a whole lot of talking at kids and it was a good thing on a certain level, but we all knew it wasn't enough. I got to know a principal there because we'd see each other month after month, and at some point he said, "Kevin, this is great but here's my problem on my campus. Would you be willing to come and do something?" I came as a volunteer, sat in the library and had 12 African American boys and we were working on disciplinary referrals and their engagement and this sort of thing. The long story short, this became COBRA. The boys came up with the name. There's a novel by Sam Greenlee called *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*. If you ever teach it you have to work on the misogynistic aspects of it. It's a Black Power era novel. There's a problem with the novel but there's also a lot going on in the novel that's really powerful in terms of having people be self-advocates, having people emerge as intellectuals who are purposeful about change, etc. It's a revolutionary text and the gang that our hero in the novel turned into a revolutionary organization, the gang was COBRA [laughter]. So the school district is funding a revolutionary

organization they just don't know it. Voices came into being, because after our first year on campus things went really well and money was a little more flush back then. The district came and said, something's happened in our data on this campus. This particular cell, African American boys, has just exploded because 12 African American boys makes a difference on the campus. So what do you do? I don't really know. You do whatever we did and they say well that sounds good enough for us, here's money, which was an interesting lesson, by the way. They didn't understand what we did. We barely understood what we did. But at that moment it was solving a problem, so here's money. Times have changed a little bit, by the way. But everything's cyclical. It'll come back around again. We were doing good work, so I was happy to take their money.

When we expanded we went to another campus and within a couple of months the boys' group was going great, and some young ladies came to us and they said, "This is not fair, this is not right. You've got a boys' group, what about us?" And I went back to the district and said, "What about them?" and the district said we're not worried about them. They didn't mean to say it that crassly, but they basically did. They had a focus on what was happening with black boys in particular and so that became their focus and everything else was going to be OK until it became a crisis too. But that wasn't good enough for the young ladies. So we said to the young ladies, just come to the meetings. They came for about three weeks and they said, "Yeah, no. We want our own." So we reallocated our resources, shifted things around, and we created a girls' group beside the boys' group. They named it VOICES, Verbally Outspoken Individuals Creating Empowered Sisters [laughter and applause]. You can clap. They were immediately tighter and better than anything the boys had ever done. They were amazing. I won't go into the next ones right now.

One of the things we do with ICUSP right now. Have any of you ever seen "Ted Talks"? We thought about it and one of the things I'm interested in is more and more scholars getting on this bandwagon, more and more scholars waking up to the possibilities, waking up to the possibility of engaged scholarship. Now faculty members have very small egos, right? No, faculty members have huge egos, and I have discovered, if I can talk to scholars, other faculty members, about how their work can be disseminated more broadly, how other people can learn the brilliant things

that they have to say, they're often on board. But it comes with a catch. You're going to have to go through our training. We partner with KLRU public television – how many of you have seen “Austin City Limits?” We record on the historic set of Austin City Limits twice a year. Five Black Studies faculty members basically giving “Ted Talks” to Black Studies and we're fighting over the name, calling it Blackademics right now but we'll probably lose the name. If anybody has a cool name to replace ours, that'll be great. What we do is take time to train them in principles of adult learning, principles associated with new media presentations, being in front of a camera, etc. Then they all do 12-minute talks. They edit them down as television shows, so every two talks becomes a TV show, and every talk is released online on an almost monthly basis. So that's one different form of community engagement that's taking advantage of new media.

My staff are all graduate students. This is one of the COBRA chapters [slide]. All of these boys are in college, every one of them. COBRA began young COBRA, which is our middle school version [new slide]. This slide is some of our kids talking about a video they had made. So these are sixth graders talking before three hundred of their peers from across the city. One of our chapters brought in the author Sam Greenlee [slide]. These are the kids using technology on the University of Texas campus. By the way, if you teach anything with public education, when you have partnerships, one of the things that is really cool is the opportunity for kids who live in the surrounding area to begin to see the possibilities. When I teach a course on public education, I invite high school kids to come in. I'll prep the kids and talk to them about the reality that they know more about high school than the college students. When it comes down to it, they are the experts in the room. They should not be hesitant to raise their hands and to say something if I or someone else gets it wrong. We're beginning to invite them in to the idea of college as a possibility. They are familiar with this technology because they're working with it when we bring them to campus. COBRA teaching young COBRA, intergenerational work. This is a workshop on what it's going to be like in high school. By the way, every different color is a different chapter [looks at slide]. The kids have their school colors on. We don't do T-shirts. We do polo shirts with embroidered lettering and there's a sense of empowerment, a sense that they're part of something special when they are involved.

[Shows slide] This is two years ago. This is some of the kids in COBRA. I don't have any money, but I go to church. When we go somewhere, I have folks at this particular church and they have six vans, one of those big churches. And they are awesome about, “Ah, yeah, Dr. Foster you can do this. We'll help you out” with this that and the other. Vans become not much of a problem. Here's a free-trade [slide] coffee house. They love to have kids in. They're very global. They're not charging us money. They're giving kids samples of this and that. It's very global in perspective when they're seeing this stuff. I'm not an elected official but I have a lot of kids and all my kids have parents. And the parents vote. So if I call Congressman Doggett and I say I've got 300 kids and the 300 kids have parents, guess what? “Kev, yes, I'll sit down with you and I'll record a video congratulating the kids on their work.” Same with Councilman Cole, Council Spellman: “I've got an awards ceremony, are you willing to come and record a special note?” “Absolutely.” Support from campus leaders and by the way I have two kids and for this work, for this to work, and this work is hard, like a 90-hour work week, but it's a fun 90-hour work week if I integrate it with the rest of my life. Everyone has to make their own decisions about this. I integrate it with my life. My kids know the COBRA kids and the VOICES kids, because my kids are on the field trips. [Points to slide] That's my kid son Malcolm, that's my daughter Marly, they come with us, they're engaged. And by the way, an unearned privilege that my kids have is that there's no questions about their leadership ability, their leadership skills. There's no question that they're going to go to college, there's no question that what was once about being a first generation person. It's not going to be a problem about being a second generation, third generation, fourth generation because they are integrated into the life of the work. Whether they love Dad or hate Dad they know what Dad's about.

[Slide] This is my staff. Does it look like we have fun? We have a lots of fun. Now a University of Illinois professor, now a University of North Texas professor, now working in a university outreach center, local arts activists, still graduate student and two more that are still more graduate students. My graduate students actually get jobs. What I've found over and over again when folks call us is that – at UT we've got research dollars, we've got the courses, we've got the course work – folks don't get hired because they fail the interview. Folks don't get hired because there are

so many amazing people out there. It turns out that community engagement is something that, like Kev was saying, is something many folks are interested in. When any of my students begin to tell their story and begin to show the purpose of their work, the pride in their work, and how their scholarship is integrated with a profound ability to engage community in powerful ways, we find they are landing jobs.

Dr. Kecskes

We want to end this with a strong sense of hope. For those of you have been in this field for as long as I have, you'll laugh at this. Twenty-five years ago, the most important thing we debated – and I can go back and show you the archives on the higher education service-learning listserv – the most important thing that we debated, according to us at that time, was whether the term service-learning should carry a hyphen or not. [laughter] That's where we were, and that's fine. Today we have graduate student networks, we have multiple international associations that support this work, just like NOSC. We have numerous publication outlets. We have graduate students like yourselves and undergraduates who are hungry for this work. New young faculty are coming in expecting it, students are expecting it. What a difference a quarter of a century makes!

Where we want to end this piece is with a short video. It's about three or four minutes. In this video you'll see a man who is on the faculty at Portland State who is an architect, who is very community engaged. I encourage you to watch for things like how he teaches, who's there, what they're doing, if you can see some research around it and enjoy a little snippet of what community-based learning or service-learning can look like. I'll just say that one of the things that was very important to Professor Sergio Palleroni, because his two kids before he moved to Portland had to go to school in temporary classrooms, in trailers, and he hated it, because he knows all the research shows that if you have natural light, good ventilation and some other simple adjustments, kids learn lot better. It's been a real fight for him. At the end of the story I'll tell you what's happened since. This is on our website, if you want to see it again.

(Video: Introduced by Wim Wiewel, president of Portland State University, "Community Engagement in Architecture: Education and the Built Environment" – <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=609jUfey8b4> – 3:45.)

[Applause]

So the epilogue to this video, which was made a couple of years ago, is now Sergio, the main professor, is so passionate about the role of architecture in creating better learning environments for these kids is that he's successfully lobbied the Oregon Legislature and now his work has made a hopefully permanent public policy change. All modular classrooms, AKA trailers, in Oregon will have to meet certain specs that he has designed focusing on natural light, ventilation, basic design elements that are actually cost efficient. To me that's a way of showing how the structural transformation, how one faculty member's vision and work, in combination with the whole community, really makes permanent, durable change. So back to Kev.

Dr. Foster

So Dr. Pleasants is a brilliant conference planner so we have a post-plenary dialog at 2:30 in room Rast B for any folks who want to continue the dialog. Kevin and I will get together and think about how we can create an interactive space. What you've found is two folks who like to talk. Right? But we do hope is that this was information packed. Was there good information this morning [loud applause]? And one of the things we both know, and we've talked about this a little bit, is that we have ideas that we've developed over the years, and we're excited about them, we're passionate about them, we're excited about them, but we are also keenly aware of what is in the room in terms of the work that you all are doing. We really want to continue a dialog this afternoon by opening it up.

Kev's work is accessible at PSU's Hatfield School of Government faculty page (<http://www.pdx.edu/hatfieldschool/kevin-kecskes-bs-edm-phd>). For my work, go to Academia.edu. It's an awesome place. Kind of like Facebook for nerds. You can start your page and there's a space to upload documents. All of my documents, all of my articles, and I have to fight with my publishers, are available there as a PDF. Follow me on Twitter and I'll follow you back. Also there's the ICUSP Facebook page. If you to the Portland State page you'll see examples of the video, you'll see examples of the work they're doing there.

Thank you to the conference host and conference planners. This has been an excuse for me to get to know a new friend and colleague, so I

really like this set up. I hope it worked for you all.

References

Furco, A. (2006). Traditional views of scholarship versus the scholarship of engagement. In J. Anderson, J. Douglass, A. Agogino, & K. Komar. *Promoting civic engagement at the University of California: Recommendations from the strategy group on civic and academic engagement*. Berkeley, CA: Center for Studies in Higher Education, p. 10.

About the Authors

Dr. Kevin Kescckes is an associate professor of Public Administration at Portland State University. Dr. Kevin Foster is an assistant professor of Educational Administration at The University of Texas at Austin.