

## Legacy Lived: A Generation of Ernest A. Lynton Award Recipients Advancing Community-Engaged Scholarship and Institutional Change

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### Introduction

[Now] the die is cast, and the fledgling product of our labors is on its way. An exhilarating moment, and also a frightening one. Our hope and our expectations are high, as is our excitement about our new adventure. Will our excitement be justified, our hopes realized? Will *Metropolitan Universities* reach its intended audience? And will that audience be pleased by what it receives?

—Ernest Lynton, 1990

Ernest need not have feared when he penned these words for the first issue of the *Metropolitan Universities* journal in the spring of 1990. Almost three decades later, both the journal and the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities (CUMU) are going strong and the award established in his name in 1997 has received over 1,100 nominations nationally, and has been conferred on 27 faculty members. Today, the journal is an online, open access journal with a readership of over 11,000, spanning the globe. The CUMU Annual Conference attracts over 400 attendees, and 103 higher education institutions are members of the coalition internationally. Two decades after his passing, this issue of *Metropolitan Universities* honors the life, work, and legacy of Ernest Lynton. In particular, the issue lifts up the impact of Ernest's, work and how his vision for strong faculty and university engagement (Lynton, 1996a; Lynton, 1995a), expanded views of scholarship and epistemology (Lynton, 1994) carries on through the work of faculty and campuses across the country.

This issue shares how Ernest's legacy continues to live through a generation of faculty who have received the Ernest A. Lynton Award for the Scholarship of Engagement—and since 2009—for Early Career Faculty.

For almost ten years, I have been involved in the Lynton Award in several capacities. First I was a graduate research assistant with the New England Resource Center for Higher Education (NERCHE) working with John Saltmarsh and Sharon Singleton. Later I served as a reviewer, as a researcher studying award recipients, as the Lynton Award Coordinator and for the last five years as the chair for the Lynton Colloquium. I have had the privilege of witnessing how Ernest's legacy lives through the exemplary scholarly work of engaged faculty across the country.

The Lynton Award is a product of the evolution of perspectives on knowledge generation and the scholarly work of faculty (Lynton & Elman, 1987; Lynton, 1995a; Driscoll and Lynton, 1999). NERCHE create the award to recognize excellence in what it then called faculty professional service and academic outreach. In 2007, the award was renamed the Ernest A. Lynton Award for the Scholarship of Engagement to reflect the move toward a more collaborative, integrative

conceptualization of faculty work, and a shift from one-directional, academia-centric outreach to the more reciprocal work of the scholarship of engagement (Ward, 2010). Faculty members connect their teaching, research, and service to community-based, public problem solving in integrated ways, so that their faculty roles overlap and reinforce each other.

By the late 2000s, evidence from Lynton Award nominations indicated that a younger generation of faculty, often women and people from other underrepresented populations, were gravitating toward the scholarship of engagement. Thus, in 2009, NERCHE focused the Lynton Award on early-career faculty, in an effort to acknowledge and legitimize the emergence of this new generation of scholars, who have created their professional identities with public commitments and who approach knowledge generation and teaching and learning as deeply collaborative scholarly work. Furthermore, as we find in the post-tenure reflections of the Lynton Award recipients in this issue, the shift to an early-career award opened the possibility that the award could influence the promotion process for recipients.<sup>i</sup>

The faculty members in this issue are exemplar community engaged scholars and now, post-tenure, stewards of civic and community engagement institutionally, nationally and internationally. It is an honor to serve as the guest editor for this issue and lift up their accomplishments as we seek to further Ernest's legacy across higher education in general and metropolitan universities in particular.

### **About this Issue**

Many of us have had the opportunity to read Ernest's own scholarship on higher education's relationship with industry (Lynton, 1984; Lynton, 1989). Ernest wrote extensively on the responsibility of the urban university (Metropolitan Universities 1990-1998; Lynton, 1983; Lynton and Elman, 1987), new scholarship and epistemology, faculty roles and the recognition and reward of engaged scholarship (Lynton, 1994; Lynton, 1995a; Lynton, 1996a; Driscoll and Lynton, 1999). The archives of *Metropolitan Universities* have many of Ernest's writings available on line. I do not seek to regurgitate his work here, but will rather share some of the findings of my historical explorations into Ernest's life and work. As a feminist and a narrative researcher, I seek to understand fully those from whom I wish to learn. This desire led me to interview colleagues and mentees who worked closely with Ernest. I spoke with Cathy Burack, Amy Driscoll, Richard Freeland, Zee Gamson, Deb Hirsch, Barbara Holland, Kerry Ann O'Meara, Gene Rice, and Lorilee Sandmann. I also received information from Judith Rameley and John Saltmarsh. These conversations helped me understand Ernest's work, commitments and characteristics, but I discovered little about Ernest's life prior to the mid-1980s. The conversations certainly piqued my curiosity about the origin of his motivations for and commitments to the work of engagement and the ways universities could more fully engage with society.

I discovered much about Ernest before his colleagues in the field of engagement and urban and metropolitan universities came to know him. I am happy to share these discoveries with you in "The Life, Work and Legacy of Ernest A. Lynton." The second article, "Community-Engaged Scholarship and Promotion and Tenure: Lessons from Lynton Award Recipients" draws on qualitative dissertation research done with 11 faculty members. Their words convey their lived

experiences with the promotion review process as community-engaged faculty members. They shared lessons about faculty identity, connection to place and epistemological orientation as strong motivators for engaged scholarship. Tenure became a ‘safety net’ enabling the freedom to practice community engaged scholarship. It set the stage for the post-tenure reflections from our contributing authors. Through the post-tenure reflections, we now see Ernest’s vision for the practice of engagement, institutional cultures that support engagement, and faculty. More senior faculty are taking up the charge as institutional and national stewards of this work. Ernest would be encouraged by the advancements made by this generation of engaged scholars, while acknowledging that there is still work to be done.

One of the last pieces Ernest wrote for *Metropolitan Universities* journal, “From the Sidelines” (he had officially stepped down as editor, but in his own words could not be “kept quiet”). Ernest has recently returned from two conferences in Great Britain.

Among all the topics discussed, I was most struck by the repeated emphasis on an issue that has long been recognized by many individual in metropolitan universities as being of great importance, and that now appears to be emerging as a central issue throughout higher education. It is the need to bridge the gap between theory and practice, and to give practical experience and workplace learning a central rather than a peripheral role. The issue is complex and has many ramifications, many of which were discussed at the London meeting: the limitations of a disciplinary organization, the definition of learning outcomes, and the tensions between competence and knowledge and between societal usefulness and academic criteria. It emphasizes knowledge created in the process of application and what Don Schon calls reflection-in-action. It raises fundamental epistemological, as well as pedagogical, questions to which, on the whole, we have not paid enough attention in our institutions.”

—Lynton, MU, Fall 1996b

Our contributing authors pay attention to fundamental epistemological, pedagogical (and I would add methodological) concerns, as well as those related to disciplinary narrowness, institutional isolation, societal usefulness, and the legitimization of faculty work through reformed institutional reward policies.

Eric DeMeuleanaere’s “Creating Dangerously” challenges us to consider how our work in urban communities “must not only examine and ponder the realities of urban violence, poverty and racial oppression, but also seek to address these realities.” What does it mean, “to engaged in such scholarship as from a place of privilege as a white male, middle-class academic?” Eric shows how we present our work in our tenure statements in ways that do not diverge too far from the norm, while also staying true to our values as engaged scholars. Eric reveals the problems in our understanding of ‘expertise’ when working with urban youth, and when the people we care about are hurting, even dying. Eric, post-tenure, challenges us to take risks that are more meaningful, strive to be a “counter-hegemonic intellectual” and activist scholar who works to create spaces where one can be an academic and an activist. Eric’s sharing of excerpts he omitted from his tenure statement illuminate the risks that tenure-track faculty members avoid in order to pass the traditional tenure process.

Michelle Dunlap's "Four Community Engagement Lessons from Detroit to Connecticut" helps us further understand the compromises community-engaged tenure track faculty members make regarding the scholarship. Michelle reflects on the strategic choices faculty members might have to make, depending on the culture of their institutions. Michelle describes an entire tradition of service that goes unrecognized as valid or legitimate, that of Black women, who spend their lives lifting up others and helping build capacity in families and communities. From this experience, Michelle works post-tenure to put students and communities of color at the center of her community engagement work and challenges the field to do similarly. Michelle, like Eric, reflects on the need to take measured risks, as we need to sustain our work and our health, while we mentor the next generation of community-engaged scholars in this work. Michelle's work gets to the heart of the concerns Ernest had about diversity within higher education and the responsibility of faculty and institutions to meet the needs of our diverse learners and urban communities.

Lorlene Hoyt's "Emancipating Minds and Practicing Freedom: A Call to Action" shares her unsuccessful first experience with the tenure process. She shares how receiving the Lynton Award prior to tenure provided external validation that added credibility to her case. The award emboldened Lorlene to broaden her "understanding of what constitutes scholarship" and reduced her sense of isolation she experienced at her institution. The award gave her "courage to experiment with the ways in which knowledge is generated and applied, and to overcome rather than reinforce the false dichotomy between practice and knowledge in the academy." However, it did not help her achieve tenure at her first institution. Taking a leadership role at another institution, Lorlene did achieve promotion, and her post-tenure reflection challenges us to identify the difference we want our scholarship to make in the world and to question how our work contributes to human dignity and well-being. The theme of risk taking continues as Lorlene asks us to exercise our power, take a stand for justice without facing any of the real risks many people across the globe face, e.g. imprisonment for speaking out.

Farrah Jacquez's "Post-tenure Reflections on Community-Engaged Scholarship in a Psychology Research Setting" shares how the discipline of clinical psychology has been slow to accept community-engaged research as valid science. Ernest had a deep understanding this with his hard science disciplinary background as a physicist. Psychology's high value on internal validity in intervention research, and lab-based randomized controlled trials, are essential to ensure that the treatments we deliver help people. Yet for Farrah, 'wicked problems' like obesity, drug abuse, health disparities suggest that the interventions developed through traditional research methods are simply not working outside of the laboratory setting. Post-tenure, Farrah believes that community-engaged research places more weight on external validity in the interest of tangible benefits to the community. Farrah offers lessons for us to help advance community-engaged research within Research I institutions, including the continued revision of promotion and tenure documents, for institutional review boards to include community-engaged research expertise, to earmark internal funding mechanisms for community-engaged research, and to create networks of community-engaged scholars across disciplines.

Nick Tobier's "Good Trouble: Post-tenure Interruptions to Our Academic 'Routines'" shares how, through his discipline of art and design, Nick uses his 'tools' to create social spaces to challenge our traditional ways of thinking, knowing and experiencing one another and our cities.

Nick's contribution offers resistance to pre-set disciplinary values, and a recognition that exponential rather than incremental change in an urgently evolving field demands a new form and language. Nick describes himself as working at the margins of a field within a discipline that is itself often at the margins of a University. Working at the margins, for Nick, needs both deliberate articulation and responsibility to translate less orthodox practices, off-center inquiry, and ways of knowing into outputs in the tenure and promotion process. Nick's contribution challenges us to see civic work as 'good work.' If our good work serves as an interruption to the existing status quo of the academy, then this 'good work' causes 'good trouble,' and serves to connect the academy to cities in more meaningful ways.

Jomella Watson-Thompson's "The Road Taken: Contributions to Advancing Community-Engaged Scholarship" shares her journey as an applied behavioral scientist. She trained for community-based participatory research approaches and even used service learning as a pedagogical practice, yet did not view her teaching, research and engagement as integrated, prior to receiving the award. Ernest's vision of community-engaged scholarship was a new revelation for Jomella. Research, teaching and service were "integrated through an ecosystem of knowledge that is mutually reinforcing and beneficial" not only to the faculty, but also to the students and to the community. Ernest's insights allowed her to see connections through and across her work that she had experienced as fragmented. While preparing to apply for the award, Jomella discovered the scholarship of engagement as a way to both explain and anchor her work. The award process helped her to frame and communicate her scholarly approach. This understanding, as well as the external validation afforded by the award, added a level of refinement to Jomella's tenure dossier, which she would not have had without the award. She reflects, post-tenure, on how the Lynton Award application process can deepen an applicant's understanding of community-engaged scholarship theory and practice. Like the Carnegie Elective Community Engagement Application process, it can help faculty members understand their own scholarly work; faculty may in turn be strategic and intentional in how they advance themselves and others as community-engaged scholars.

These exemplars of community-engaged scholarship advance Ernest's legacy through their scholarly work in and with communities. They bring their institutions closer to society as they re-examine, post-tenure, how to use of their power and position as tenured faculty members. They challenge the academy to go beyond its traditional concepts of scholarship, epistemologies and disciplinary silos, to think more creatively and innovatively about networked, transdisciplinary ways of knowing and generating new knowledge across the disciplines can lead to more tangible, meaning outcomes for our communities. Their individual impact is significant, yet their collective impact can ensure the quality of engaged scholarly work and lead to a re-centering of the university from the periphery to the center of the cities, communities and society. This is what Ernest sought as the ideal for our urban and metropolitan universities in particular and for higher education in general. As the work of these faculty members show us, he need not have feared, for the public future of the academy is safe. As they too have high hopes and expectations for their universities to more fully realize their societal responsibilities.

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<sup>i</sup> Excerpts from Saltmarsh, J., Ward, E., Clayton, P. (2011). Profiles of public engagement: Findings from the Ernest A. Lynton Award for the Scholarship of Engagement for Early Career Faculty. NERCHE Report. New England Resource Center for Higher Education, University of Massachusetts, Boston.