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Editor Introduction: Enhancing Scholarship and Research through Praxis to Build the Field

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As a faculty member in the Higher Education Program at Loyola University Chicago, and a scholar-administrator overseeing a teaching and learning center that engages multiple audiences, including faculty, community partners, and students, I am deeply aware of the organizational complexity of an urban university. Frankly, institutions of higher education are complex organizations that are multi-dimensional in all aspects, from the mission and vision to academic and co-curricular programs and the constituencies served (students, faculty, staff, external partners, alumni, funders, community members, etc.). The reality is that institutions of higher education exist for multiple purposes and multiple audiences.

When you apply an anchor institution framework to higher education institutions, the contextual complexity expands to include the neighborhoods and communities in which our organizations reside, operate, serve, and work. There are many implications of recognizing and elevating the community context in which our institutions reside. Acknowledging our roles as anchor institutions in our communities ultimately means we recognize our role as economic engines that have a responsibility for community development to hire locally, patronize local businesses, and provide capacity to local organizations.

Yet, the role of institutions of higher education in the local community is amplified when considering the regional, national, and global implications. Richard Guarasci challenges us to rethink the role of institutions in his recent work, *Neighborhood Democracy: Building Anchor Partnerships between Colleges and Their Communities* (2022), "Higher Education needs to demonstrate its larger contribution to the cultural, scientific, political, and aesthetic prosperity of the nation. It must become, itself, an agent for civic prosperity and national advancement." (p. 18). The longstanding mission of higher education has been to prepare individuals to be citizens in an evolving democracy, and the civic mission of colleges and universities takes many shapes

in the present, from expansive community engagement programs to extension programs and creative partnerships. Exploring the richly nuanced and ever-evolving relationship between campuses and communities has consistently been at the heart of *Metropolitan Universities* journal and the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities (CUMU).

This issue embraces the organizational complexity of higher education institutions and the multi-dimensional approaches of inquiry to exploring how campuses and communities partner, connect, relate, operate, and co-create. With a strong history of publishing research since 1990, the journal has provided an opportunity for original research, scholarship, and the creation of knowledge for faculty, scholar-administrators, community leaders, graduate students, and authors seeking to contribute to building the field of campus-community engagement. To acknowledge, celebrate, and elevate the complexity of the field and topics represented in the journal, the Editorial Board of *Metropolitan Universities* journal is excited to launch the *Praxis* category for the journal in addition to *Original Research*. Given the nuanced, multi-dimensional aspects of campus and community relationships, drawing from various approaches, including community development, social and economic mobility, community engagement, partnership models, equity, justice, and belonging lenses, community impact, and anchor frameworks, the addition of praxis scholarship is an essential step forward to articulate the need for theory that informs practice and practice that informs theory.

Elevating praxis scholarship, or the scholarly inquiry through the lens of theory and practice, allows the journal to acknowledge the variety of research and scholarship which the journal has published over the years but also specifically articulates and claims the scholarship of engagement as welcome in this space. Recognizing the many roles within higher education institutions beyond faculty and staff, it cements that the journal welcomes third-space professionals, boundary spanners, and all those who exist in the betwixt and between. As Ramalay (2014) clearly challenged us to work toward "scholarship that arises from and informs efforts to promote human well-being in a healthy environment" (p. 19) in *The Changing Role of Higher Education: Learning to Deal with Wicked Problems*:

> The people who are growing into the role of boundary spanner must ask themselves several defining questions as they develop a distinctive identity and purpose within the academy and seek to advance the practice of engaged scholarship, learning, and teaching in cooperation with members of the community both on campus and beyond. (p. 17)

It offers a continued pathway for community partners to co-generate knowledge with academics, and it welcomes scholar-administrators to continue to fill the theory-practice gap as they draw knowledge from their local context and experience.

In effect, the journal has often published practitioner research, but now offers praxis as a frame that encourages rigorous practitioner research from scholar-administrators:

Through inquiry and reflection, scholar-administrators have the opportunity to build from their local context, leveraging and generating local knowledge. In effect, practitioner research emerges from practice and anchors broad inquiry into the specific study of practice. This scholarly approach designs inquiry (or research) related to theory, explicitly connected to a theoretical framework or conceptual model. With experience as a rich source of knowledge, practitioner research allows practitioners to collect and analyze practice-based data that responds to the questions (inquiry) they have articulated. Such inquiry is rooted explicitly in the organizational or community-based context of the practitioner. (Green, p. 96, 2023)

With the praxis scholarship clearly named, the journal provides clear direction for further building the field, and offers scholars approaches to guide them in their scholarly journal. The journal still features original research articles as it has since its origin in 1991. Still, the deep critical inquiry associated with the generation of knowledge through research is equally extended to praxis scholarship. For example, submission types that may fall into the praxis scholarship category may include comprehensive literature reviews of existing research, theoretical articles, epistemological explorations, case studies, methodological papers, and applied research reviews. For a more detailed overview, visit the journal website at https://www.cumuonline.org/metropolitan-universities-journal/.

In celebration of this launch of praxis scholarship, this issue features several praxis articles alongside original research articles, all of which offer scholarly inquiry into various facets of campus and community relationships. In *Case Studies of Placed-based Education as Action to Address Health Inequities: The Health Commons,* authored by Clark et al*., explores* hyperlocal, place-based learning through an anchor institution lens juxtaposed with a community collaborative model of care, offering practical strategies to implement such a model. Raisch's *Leveraging University Capital and In-Kind Resources into Community Partnerships* also inquires into hyperlocal community engagement, exploring the various types of capital that exist at an institution of higher education through the equity-centered collective impact framework. Emerging from this study are practical tools and strategies, along with the frameworks, to identify university capital resources. Focarile's scholarly work, *Utilizing Centers for Teaching and Learning to Support Dual Enrollment Educators,* provides a literature review and case studies to expand the dialogue around the need for educator development for dual enrollment courses, linking secondary education and higher education more deeply with recommendations for practice.

Denison et al. describe a case study of urban transformation facilitated through the place-based anchor network and the Leeds Anchor Progression Framework in *Developing an Integrated Anchor System: The Leeds City Inclusive Anchor Network.* Stanlick inquires into global project-based learning online with case studies demonstrating challenges in pedagogical design in *Modeling and cultivating critical global citizenship skills in the online space: Lessons from*

responsive remote project-based global learning. This scholarly piece commences with practical strategies for course design as well as recommendations for educators, administrators, and researchers, which contribute to the scholarship of teaching and learning. Further contributing to the praxis scholarship featured in this issue, is Young's *Integration of Trauma-Informed Practices*, which advocates for a paradigm shift employing trauma-informed practices to foster student success through the exploration of trauma-informed practice frameworks. The emphasis on pedagogical strategies and critical inquiry into teaching practices evolve into strategies for practice to enhance classroom engagement and student success.

Original research articles featured in this issue challenge us to acknowledge the complexity of campus community relationships from perspectives of institutional structures, diverse populations, and purposeful, community-centered strategic planning. Telles-Langdon's article *University Engagement with the Community through Physical Activity Opportunities: Lessons Learned from a Community Charter Guaranteeing Access to the University Recreation Complex* explores community engagement and relationships through the University recreation complex. Telles-Langdon facilitates a qualitative methodological inquiry into the charter established for university and community relations, indicating the distinct role that sports and structured physical activity play in community building and engagement. Cofield's *Examining the Experienced Barriers to Seeking Mental Health Treatment Among Metropolitan Millennial Black Men* features conceptions of black masculinity and Critical Race Theory, utilized as a multi-dimensional framework, in a phenomenological study to provide in-depth information on the barriers to counseling experienced by Black men. Strawser's *Tactical to Transformational: Reclaiming the Strategic Purpose of a Metropolitan Campus* leverages faculty insights on community-engaged scholarship in a study that informs both strategic planning and approaches to university-community partnerships. Through collaborative stakeholder engagement, this study elevates the importance of community-engaged scholarship in the context of urban institutions of higher education.

This issue demonstrates the complexity of higher education institutions and the multi-dimensionality of campus-community relationships. In essence, with the addition of praxis scholarship joining original research, the *Metropolitan Universities* journal provides a space to explore, explain, inquire, interrogate, and uncover the complexity of our reality.

References

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