

## Book Reviews / Comptes rendus

**Inman, P., & Schuetze, H.G. (Eds.) (2010). *The Community Engagement and Service Mission of Universities*. Leicester: National Institute of Adult Continuing Education. Pages: 342. Price USD \$27.70 (paperback).**

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This book is a collection of papers based on presentations at a conference hosted by PASCAL International Observatory and the Centre for Policy Studies in Higher Education and Training at the University of British Columbia in May, 2009 in Vancouver. One purpose of the conference was to advance the work of PASCAL's PURE project (PASCAL Universities' Regional Engagement). This major research initiative seeks to arrive at a better understanding of the 'third mission' of universities and to promote the concept that universities must be engaged with their regions and that regions should consider universities and higher education institutions to be one of their greatest assets for regional cultural, social, and economic development. The project takes as its starting point that teaching and research are the first two missions of a university and that engagement with their regions or communities is often considered a third mission.

*The Community Engagement and Service Mission of Universities* provides useful descriptions of some contemporary activities taking place around the world, but mostly in North America. The introduction by the editors includes a quick sketch of the contents of each chapter, but leads off with a useful short explanation of the PASCAL International Observatory and its origins in a series of conferences and related studies of learning cities and learning regions sponsored by the Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). It also includes a discussion of the somewhat nebulous and disputed concept of the "third mission" of universities.

Six of the eighteen chapters, along with the introductory chapter by the editors, address broad issues related to the role of universities in regional development and their "third mission," variously defined, including trends affecting re-conceptions of the third mission, lessons to be learned from tensions in engagement, particular problems in engaging in regional economic development, benchmarking engagement, measuring the

impact of partnerships, and institutionalizing university community engagement. Several authors address the thorny issues of rewarding service activities and dealing with collective agreements in universities.

The remaining 12 chapters are grouped in Part 2 of the volume, titled “North American perspectives and experience” and recall a richer history of engagement in the United States than is generally acknowledged and draw insights from a range of case studies of engagement by universities chiefly in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Much is made of the importance of leadership, respectful and mutually beneficial partnerships, and adequate financing; the critical significance of understanding power imbalances in partnerships; and of the relevance of context. Several papers focus on very specific communities, including rural Mexico, Aboriginal communities, and francophone communities in Canada outside Quebec. One addresses ‘translational science’ as a way of engaging the communities of practice in clinics and industry to help improve operational protocols, help research innovations become marketable products, and contribute to scientific governance and policy development.

This collection of papers should be of considerable interest to all who are involved in the scholarship or practice of community-university engagement. Several papers contain references to other documents that readers might find of interest.

One of the most interesting outcomes of the conference was the challenge to its underlying assumption that engagement is the third mission of universities. Some participants argued that relegating engagement to the third mission (equating it to the ‘service’ function) entirely missed the point that engagement should be integrated into the teaching and research missions and unnecessarily marginalized it.

And so the title of the book arising from the conference, *The Community Engagement and Service Mission of Universities*, differs from the name of the conference itself, *Community Engagement and Service: The Third Mission of Universities*. A subtle distinction, perhaps, but a step in the right direction if only a small one. At least the title of the book acknowledges that the terms may not be interchangeable. But because the change was superimposed on the papers, most of them continue to obscure the point. One has to wait until Chapter 16 for a serious challenge to the assumption that community engagement is the third, or service, mission of universities. There Hall and Bérubé (p. 278) note, “[c]ommunity engagement is in fact an integrating function that cuts across the older notions of a separation of research, teaching and service”. Missing this point, “does serious damage to our capacity to understand current global trends in higher education” (p. 278). It also misses several other points. Universities engage with communities in a host of ways, in recruitment, lobbying, and fund development activities to name a few, and in capacities other than as academic institutions – as employers, as neighbours, and as citizens - through the work of people other than the professoriate. The relationships they develop or damage in these capacities affect the ability of students and academics to do their work and of communities and regions to do theirs. Managing those relationships is critical to the university’s, the community’s, and the region’s ability to thrive. Equating service and community engagement is also strategically perilous. It positions community engagement to meet its opponents on their grounds but with its weakest allies, demoralized troops, and poorest armaments. It requires advocates of community engagement to address all the history of the disparagement of the service function, much of which does

not pertain to this work. Why not ally the cause with the stronger functions of teaching and research and argue that community-based research and community service learning are alternative ways of carrying out those traditional functions, not “add-ons” to the job of already over-stretched academics? Those, and other forms of community engagement, are simply new approaches that may or may not be appropriate in any given situation. However, they do open up choices and expand options rather than add to burdens.♣