

## FOREWARD

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## POST PANDEMIC COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Welcome to the 19<sup>th</sup> edition of the Journal of Service-Learning in Higher Education. When I am asked what we do on our campus, I say that we try to do everything. Institutions of higher education are living labs for the wider world. We function much like the communities where we are embedded: providing transportation, housing, maintaining buildings and greenspaces, and providing all (or most) of the goods and services necessary for our “residents.” We micro-manage every dollar spent and every dollar earned. We react to the variances of our environment – and try to collect and report data that can be used to benefit our communities, regions, and the world at large.

Much of what we report is the dry data of academic research. Occasionally, we get to highlight flashes of brilliance and surprise. Mostly though, our impact goes unnoticed in our communities except for the change in traffic from summer to fall. But why then are so many university communities considered ideal locations for family life? I believe college communities thrive in no small part due to the community service commitment that students, faculty, and staff embrace. According to Gallup News, college students (and graduates) volunteer at a rate about double that of non-college students (30% vs 14%). The Corporation for National and Community Service which oversees AmeriCorps volunteers, reports about 200,000 members complete about 1.8 billion hours of service each year. This translates into a healthy volunteer workforce contributing to service agency outreach, primary and secondary school support, support for community events, and more. An incalculable economic impact that is seldom celebrated except within the benefiting agencies themselves.

Service-Learning, or course-based community engagement, is a primary feature of teaching excellence across many of the 4000+ colleges and universities in the United States and internationally. The nine articles that are in this edition of JSLHE represent the application of discipline-specific study translated to direct community impact. Students and mentors engaged in communities on three different continents. It is my honor to be able to present these experiences. Thank you for reading and for sharing – but mostly, thank you for your service.

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Journal of Service-Learning in Higher Education