

Hodges, R. A., & Dubb, S. (2012). *The road half traveled: University engagement at a crossroads*. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press. 237pp.

## Review by Tami L. Moore

In *The Road Half Traveled: University Engagement at a Crossroads*, Rita Hodges and Steve Dubb (2012) address a growing concern that community engagement has not achieved all it should, or could, to realize universities' responsibilities as key components in first stabilizing and then revitalizing urban communities. Higher education institutions "are place-based institutions anchored within their communities, and they are increasingly recognized as key contributors to urban and community development" (p. xvii). Urban universities, specifically, are standing at a crossroads,

on the verge of an important new vision of what might be possible if [their leaders] seek to *fully achieve their anchor institution mission*, that is to *consciously and strategically apply their long-term, place-based economic power, in combination with their human and intellectual resources, to better the welfare of the communities in which they reside*. (emphasis in original, pp. xix-xx)

An anchor institution such as a museum, a hospital, or a university is permanently located, literally *anchored*, in a city or region and unlikely to relocate in search of, for example, a more attractive tax package or better access to transportation routes. Anchor institutions act as drivers of growth in the region (see *Taylor & Luter, 2013*, for a review of literature on this topic). Pursuing an anchor institution mission, like community engagement, requires partnering with community members and investing institutional resources to improve community well being. The anchor institution movement differs from traditional community engagement in that enacting the anchor institution role requires a new understanding of the university as an integral member of a community responsible to its neighbors rather than an institution coincidentally located there.

Hodges and Dubb differentiate their work from much of the community engagement literature, which focuses more on the activities of faculty and students. By ignoring the institution's cor-

porate activities, scholars have “miss[ed] an important half of the picture” (*p. xiv*). Therefore, Hodges and Dubb focus instead on university practices including purchasing, hiring, investments, and real estate development much more than individual partnerships. It is also important to differentiate this book from economic development literature and practices that promote gentrification and make it economically difficult for long-time residents to remain. Pursuing an anchor institution mission is about improving the overall quality of life for all residents of the neighborhood.

The book reports the findings of a multisite case study, examining 10 institutions that are succeeding in enacting a new mission. In Part I, the authors critique university efforts to promote real change in communities (Chapter 1); review three strategies for anchor-based community development emerging from the data (Chapter 2); and describe six varieties of institutional engagement activity examined in the case studies: revitalization projects; corporate investments in economic development; academic service-learning and faculty engagement; public health partnerships; capacity building with community organizations; and multianchor, city, and regional partnerships (Chapter 3).

Examples of activities promoting an anchor institution mission abound in Part II and constitute a considerable strength of the volume. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 each present institutional case studies to illustrate a strategy for enacting the anchor institution mission described in Chapter 2 and conclude with a cross-case summary of activities in the six categories of engagement reviewed in Chapter 3. Universities featured in Chapter 4 act as *facilitators*, responsive to community needs, spreading institutional resources thinly across multiple cross-sector, multineighborhood partnerships. For example, community-based research performed through “diffuse,” “grassroots,” and “fairly random” partnerships shaped largely by personal interest links Portland State University (PSU) faculty and students in 230 senior capstone courses with community partners (*p. 45*). PSU faculty in education, social work, and urban/public affairs have also received grant funding to support more formal partnerships targeting poverty reduction, environmental quality, and community health.

Chapter 5 highlights institutions acting as *leaders* who focus significant institutional resources on the revitalization of specific—usually adjacent, low-income—neighborhoods and the area around their campus, with an eye to improving safety and quality of life for the university’s students and employees. Administrators at leader universities consult community stakeholders but retain most of the

decision-making authority in developing appropriate strategies, allocating institutional funds, and dedicating staff. University of Cincinnati leaders recognize the connection between stable neighborhoods and campus safety and therefore set poverty reduction in the surrounding neighborhoods as a core institutional goal. To that end, the university committed \$148.6 million over 10 years to real estate development in the impoverished Uptown neighborhood and entered into a partnership to establish a workforce development program for underemployed workers within the University Hospital system (p. 82).

Campus leaders of a third type, featured in Chapter 6, act as *conveners*, bringing together cross-sector partnerships aimed at addressing community-based concerns in specific neighborhoods, usually away from the campus. Community organizations and local neighbors are “co-participants” in planning and “owners” of neighborhood revitalization (p. 89); institutional leaders build strategic relationships and leverage public and private (rather than institutional) funds to support collaborative community development initiatives. Emory University helped to build an 870-unit apartment complex with 20% of the units designated for sale below market value. Through another initiative, small teams of Emory students led by graduate students and faculty receive a \$3,200 stipend along with housing and tuition waivers for their work across metro Atlanta each summer on projects identified by the Community Foundation of Greater Atlanta and other community-based organizations.

Institutional leaders were candid, identifying challenges and the critical decisions to be made along the way. None of this is to say that the work is easy or particularly intuitive. Neither have the efforts of any of the 10 institutions highlighted in *The Road Less Traveled* been flawless. Perhaps that is the real value of this book. The authors present a very thoughtful analysis in Part III of the promising practices and lessons learned, intentionally linking to the community engagement literature, primarily as represented in *Handbook of Engaged Scholarship* (Fitzgerald, Seifer, & Burack, 2010).

Hodges and Dubb keep their focus on institutional/corporate activities in Part IV. The final chapters review three areas that must be developed to realize the anchor institution mission: internal infrastructure/capacity for partnership work (Chapter 9), philanthropic efforts to catalyze change (Chapter 10), and policy instruments to encourage and then support pursuit of an anchor mission (Chapter 11).

The conclusion invites us to “think forward” (p. 165), reminding readers that new policies and strategic philanthropy can make a difference, but ultimately universities must learn to think and to behave differently in pursuit of this new mission. Hodges and Dubb provide 14 best practices from the 10 schools that might be replicated. For example, Syracuse’s story encourages the creation of policies to revise the academic rewards structure as well as university business practices. This effort epitomizes the underlying theme of this book: Change must happen in every aspect of the institution’s behavior.

There is one final point to make about this volume: Institutional leaders must learn to recognize the importance of place in determining community development strategies. Specific practices are most successful when they reflect the social, cultural, historic, and geographic context within which the collaborations happen. In other words, place matters in engagement. The half-traveled road described by the authors is both similar to and very different from the one lying ahead of institutions serving nonmetropolitan or rural areas, so the best practices and institutional examples included in this volume cannot be translated directly into any other context. Fortunately, Nancy Franklin (2009) and others (e.g., Franklin, Sandmann, Franklin, & Settle, 2008) are developing the scholarship and practice of regional engagement, but there is much more to be done given the critical role of universities in nonmetropolitan areas in the United States.

The case studies suggest that when institutional leaders begin to take seriously their institutions’ roles as “fixed assets in the community” (Taylor & Luter, 2013, p. 3), they come to understand the terms of engagement differently. A community engagement initiative is not a short-term, one-off endeavor but rather one event in a permanent relationship that is deepened through the very work of engaging. That—strengthening relationships through interaction over time—is the most valuable return to be realized by an institution enacting an anchor institution mission, as strong relationships provide a foundation upon which the community can move to address future issues.

## References

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## About the Reviewer

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