



A New Kind of Research Journal

Cassandra E. Simon

It is with great pride, enthusiasm, and anticipation that I invite you to read the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship* — “a new kind of research journal.”

An enormous amount of work has gone into the development of this journal and I believe you will see that effort reflected in this edition and in the impact it will have on the field. It has been an interesting journey, many aspects of which Vice President Samory T. Pruitt shared in his welcome notes. The journey has not been one with a completely charted course. It could not have been, given our time constraints. More importantly, it should not have been. A completely charted course would have been counter to the ideals of authentic community engagement that we have attempted to follow.

It’s a cliché but a useful one in this case: We are a work in progress actively seeking ideas from campus and community in terms of structure, goals, and vision. We remain open to where we are going and how we will get there.

As we look at JCES, it is important to keep in mind that it represents the collective thinking of a group of innovative individuals with whom I am privileged to work. First, we want JCES to be the premiere academic journal in community engagement scholarship. We want it to look different, to be different, to be one journal that, with its related website, will be as dynamic as the work going on in our disciplines, a rarity in academic

publishing. Second, we want it to be a vehicle for a new type of conversation about community engagement and its place in the academic review, tenure, promotion, and reward process. Third, we want JCES to lead the way in defining scholarship in the academy, scholarship in which faculty, students, and community members participate from idea to presentation through distribution. Fourth, and please pardon another cliché but I don’t know another way to say it: We want JCES to make a difference, not just on campuses and in classrooms but in communities.

That’s a tall order, but with your help we will make it happen.

JCES intends to be a leader in facilitating a new kind of discussion about engagement scholarship. Believing that engagement scholarship is transformative and that it is time for transformation in academia, JCES will be at the forefront in strengthening relationships between communities and institutions of higher learning.

Transformation and change. These words cause uneasiness. Our endeavor will be no different. As we dare to be a new kind of scholarly journal, questions will arise about our rigor. We are prepared to answer those questions. Be assured JCES, like all quality academic journals, uses blind peer review with rigorous evaluation criteria fully vetted through an editorial board nominated by university presidents, provosts, and accomplished scholars representing a wide range of scholarly achievements. I am extremely

proud of our board members and fortunate to be able to draw upon their individual and collective knowledge, talent, judgment, and disciplinary backgrounds to advance engagement scholarship worldwide.

As you examine the board's makeup you will see a remarkable breadth of disciplines, experiences, and backgrounds. Without the guidance, support, and feedback of the board, it would have been impossible to offer the selections you will find in this issue.

Just how does JCES propose to be a new kind of scholarly journal? Well, for one thing it has a different size and look. Our designers chose a format that is a blend of the news magazine and research journal. This puts us in the right publication genre but gives us more room and a better canvas for creative layouts. All right, to be entirely transparent, JCES is the exact size of *National Geographic*. And like that venerable publication, we selected earth-tone colors, appropriate, we think, for the kind of down-to-earth content JCES hopes to feature. We have also stepped up the use of photos and graphics. Is a picture worth a thousand words? Rarely, but that's not the point. We live in a visual world, something most academic journals haven't noticed. While we won't over-do it, JCES will be more visual than the usual research journal. It will feature more color, too, but color is expensive. We'll have to build color gradually as we acquire more funds and as contributors send us more color images.

Will we be qualitative or quantitative? That's not the point either. The best scholarship today requires both, along with insightful commentary, informative field reports on practice, teaching, and community participation, all of which are featured in the inaugural edition and will be more evident in future editions. The journal will have a website that eventually will add multimedia to the text and images presented in JCES. Articles will be keyed to the site, adding video, photo galleries, and interactivity. We are especially excited about what JCES online will add to our ability to communicate with broad audiences on matters of health, education, innovation, leadership, justice, finance, the arts, culture, and more.

When it comes to content, JCES will be a hybrid. Research documentation will employ APA style, but you'll find AP (Associated Press) style, too. That's because we don't want style to

interfere with content as it sometimes does in academic works. So get ready for single spacing after everything – commas, full stops, etc. Get ready for commas always going inside quote marks. It's simpler that way, and the majority of printed materials use that style. We will not use single quotes unless they are quotes within quotes. Orphan quotes (clever quotes without an obvious source) will be kept to a minimum. Get ready for research articles that use more narrative style and active voice, something often missing in academic writing. Get ready for a capitalization style that rejects deification by capitalization. We'll do our best never to capitalize pseudo proper nouns, as in "Cassandra Simon is an Associate Professor of Social Work." Make that "Cassandra Simon is an associate professor of social work."

We have gone round and round about it, but we have decided to keep the "serial comma" in keeping with the practice of the majority of journals and books. Thus in JCES it will be, "The American flag is red, white, and blue." That's simpler and sometimes without that last comma the meaning is unclear.

JCES will be innovative, providing a venue for scholarly works that report on the integration of teaching, service learning, outreach, community engagement, and research. Students and community partners will be an integral part of the journal, as they are in this first edition, a role that will expand as together we find imaginative ways to engage each other.

In this inaugural issue of JCES you will find an array of works, representing some of the variety JCES promises. Whether discussing how to best establish and evaluate equitable partnerships between universities and communities (McClellan and Behringer), or the importance of linking families, communities, and universities (Burbank and Hunter), or how best to engage minority participants in health care research (Janosky et al.) the selections in this issue demonstrate the importance of community partners in our mission.

It is impossible to speak of engagement scholarship and not recognize the central involvement of youth in community engagement work and subsequently its scholarship. From addressing the benefits of engaging youth in citizen science projects to recognizing the overall value of youth-adult partnerships, JCES Volume 1, Number 1 represents work from those who have

bridged the gap between the classroom and the community. Emphasizing the importance of authentic community engagement, this first issue includes articles in which youth are equal partners and stakeholders and helped in manuscript preparation.

So, yes, we have high school authors in a peer-reviewed journal. We also have an international author of a field practice article that demonstrates how the world has become our classroom. This latter article, arising from outreach in Peru led by two engineering faculty, demonstrates the truth that engagement scholarship is possible in every discipline. Two other pieces, by a community member and a graduate student, represent past and future reflections on community engagement as they relate to The University of Alabama's traditional emphasis on service.

On behalf of the JCES staff, I must thank the university administration for its support of this effort. From President Robert Witt to Provost Judy Bonner to Interim Vice President for Research Joe Benson, and Community Affairs Vice President Samory T. Pruitt, we have received support with only one condition attached: Do good work. We also enjoyed the support of UA System Chancellor Malcolm Portera, whose pio-

neering work in community engagement in the 1980s underlies much of UA's current commitment to outreach and engagement scholarship.

I must give special thanks to Samory Pruitt, who had the vision to embark on this project. His ability to draw together diverse talents and resources and his confidence that we could actually bring this journal to fruition is the mark of a true leader. I would also be remiss without acknowledging the contributions of Professor Emeritus Ed Mullins, whose expertise in editing and publishing has made this issue a reality.

Finally, I want to thank our students and community members, those we teach and with whom we partner. They make reciprocity a reality. They allow us into their lives and in so doing they teach and transform us and vice versa. I look forward to our journey together as we develop JCES into its fullest potential.

About the Author

Cassandra E. Simon is an associate professor of social work at The University of Alabama. A native of New Orleans, her Ph.D. is from The University of Texas at Arlington. She can be reached at csimon@bama.ua.edu.

Members of the JCES development committee (from left): Samory T. Pruitt, Kyun Soo Kim, Cassandra E. Simon, Mary Allen Jolley, and Edward Mullins.

