

## *A Note from the Guest Editor . . .*

Effective and sustainable community-university engagement is fundamentally relational. It is philosophy and action built upon social relationships among people and among organizations, relationships that are grounded in respect, reciprocity, and mutual benefit. It is a way of being in the world and an approach to professional practice that involves working with and for people in their communities on issues of collective and public importance.

Moving the engagement agenda forward in a positive and productive way requires increased appreciation for the widespread existence and impressive breadth and depth of engaged scholarship across our universities, along with a more pluralistic view of what constitutes scholarly work; a better understanding of the practice of engaged scholarship, including establishing and sustaining effective community-university partnerships; the establishment of serious and substantive organizational development initiatives that provide supportive enabling settings for engagement as scholarly work; and, most important, a recognition of the differing needs, issues, tensions, and views facing the citizens and communities we serve. The articles in this special issue, through the specific, grounded stories they tell, touch on these critical issues.

This issue of the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* is the first of two issues featuring articles drawn primarily from presentations given at the 2008 National Outreach Scholarship Conference, held at Penn State University October 7–9, 2008. They all relate to the theme of the conference, *Innovation and Leadership for Engagement*. They were selected for inclusion in this special issue of the *Journal* based on the outcome of a blind peer review process. This issue also includes articles that detail the initiatives of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation Engagement Regional Award winners as well as the national C. Peter Magrath Community Engagement Award Winner. The next issue of the *Journal*, volume 13, number 4, will also feature eight articles drawn primarily from the conference themes.

My deepest gratitude and thank-you goes to Kathleen Ann (Kate) Schramm, research assistant, for her outstanding contributions and steadfast support on every aspect and throughout every phase of the editing process.

I hope you find the articles in this special issue of the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* of interest and value,

and that they stimulate your thinking about the role of higher education in engagement and community-university partnerships as well as engaged scholarship and its practice.

Theodore R. Alter  
Professor of Agricultural, Environmental,  
and Regional Economics  
The Pennsylvania State University