

Percy, S. L., N. L. Zimpher, and M. J. Brukardt, eds. *Creating a New Kind of University: Institutionalizing Community-University Engagement*. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing Company, 2006.

### Review by Nancy E. Franklin

**C**reating a New Kind of University editors Stephen Percy, Nancy Zimpher, and Mary Jane Brukardt played key leadership and implementation roles in the development of “The Milwaukee Idea,” a multifaceted university-community partnership and cornerstone of Zimpher’s presidency at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee. This volume, published in 2006, follows the editors’ previous book, *A Time for Boldness: A Story of Institutional Change* (2002), which captured the story of the birth and early work associated with the Milwaukee Idea. It is intended to identify the lessons learned by people associated with this initiative from the perspective of six years’ experience, as well as to reflect on “the state of engagement nationally” (Percy, Zimpher, and Brukardt, 2006, xviii). The editors contribute their own perspectives on both the Milwaukee Idea and the broader context of university engagement as bookends to a set of chapters authored by people directly involved with the Milwaukee partnership and by other nationally recognized engagement advocates.

Percy, Zimpher, and Brukardt frame their reflections on engagement from an institutional perspective. They grapple with the challenges associated with creating a whole that is more than a sum of disparate engagement activities, and moving from “boutique initiatives” to sustainable partnerships. In the opening chapter authored by the editors, Percy, Zimpher, and Brukardt (2006) suggest that a shift in conceptualizing engagement is needed in order to realize institutional-scale engagement. They state, “Creating a ‘new kind of university’—an engaged university—will require that colleges and universities move beyond experimentation to institutionalization” (p. 5). Citing the work of Cavendish (2001), Holland (2001), and Campus Compact (2004) on institutional engagement, Percy, Zimpher, and Brukardt indicate that the sustainability of university partnership in community is characterized by institutional cultural and structural change, prioritization of engagement in the university’s mission, and an academic enterprise that transcends disciplinary silos and staid faculty reward structures.

Percy, Zimpher, and Brukardt advance the thesis that institutional university engagement must be mission driven, partnership focused, grounded in scholarship, and institutionally supported. When engagement is mission driven and connected to faculty governance,

decision making on many levels is guided by the institution's commitment to the community partnership, increasing the alignment of individual and collective priorities. University-community partnerships built upon trust, reciprocal relationships, and parity result in shared goal-setting, responsibility for resourcing, advocacy, and learning. Engaged student learning and faculty discovery draw upon scholarly approaches that build on the best practices of those who have gone before and include reflection, analysis, and evaluation. Institutional support in the form of senior leadership, administrative structure, and financial resources is essential for sustained engagement.

One of the book's greatest strengths is its grounding in a case study of institutional engagement. The case study provides an opportunity to examine university-community partnering on many different dimensions and analyze the commitment to being an engaged university over a period of time. A particularly interesting chapter written by Jon Wergin, a senior scholar with the American Association for Higher Education 1994–2005, offers a third-party analysis of the Milwaukee Idea from the perspective of someone who conducted an extensive external review of the project in 2000–2001. Wergin builds on his own research cataloging the successes and failures of community partnerships associated with the University of Illinois–Chicago's "Great Cities Initiative" (*Braskamp and Wergin 1998*) to outline the challenges of engagement. His analysis is centered on "transformative change" as defined by the American Council on Education—culture-altering, pervasive, intentional, and long-lived (*Eckel, Hill, and Green 1998*). Forces associated with the Milwaukee Idea supporting and resisting transformative change are presented, along with engagement implications for other institutions.

Most of the book's other chapters address a specific facet of the practice of engagement. Of particular note are the chapters on community conversations, the Milwaukee Partnership Academy, and a nonprofit management institute, because these offer perspectives and models that advance our understanding of how to structure effective engagement relationships. Based on interviews with a cross-section of Milwaukee community members, chapter 3 outlines the predominant themes emerging from community partners that inform institutional engagement. Interspersed quotes that provide community partners' positive and negative perceptions of the university's engagement in Milwaukee offer credible and illustrative insights to the opportunities and challenges associated with a large-scale university-community partnership.

The Milwaukee Partnership Academy, as described by University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee education faculty in chapter 10, offers a striking model of partnering to systematically advance a critical community agenda through a broad-based, long-term commitment of many organizations. The vitality of the partnership today and its success in securing more than \$40 million in grants speak to the possibilities associated with a focused commitment to partnering. Another noteworthy model emerging from the Milwaukee Idea, the creation of the Helen Bader Institute for Nonprofit Management Education, is discussed in chapter 11. Initiated by the Milwaukee community, this capacity-building focus on the nonprofit sector has resulted in a robust organization and associated set of projects that continue to the present.

While the central themes addressed across the middle chapters seem to have been thoughtfully selected, there is a missed opportunity to delve deeply into a reflection on the lessons of engagement that can be learned from the experience of those associated with the Milwaukee Idea. The role of shared governance addressed in chapter 4 is presented in a prescriptive manner, rather than as a reflection on and analysis of what happened at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (UWM). The chapter 5 discussion of continuing education's interface with the "new" institutional commitment to engagement at UWM hints at, but does not thoroughly explore, resentments associated with a perceived usurping of engagement primacy within the university. Chapters 6 and 8 offer a nice summary of the history of engagement and the scholarship of engagement, respectively, but fail to link tightly with the case study at the core of the book. Chapter 7 errs in the opposite direction by providing too much detail about a curricular reform approach at UWM and little about its engagement component. Similarly, the discussion of faculty development in chapter 8 focuses almost exclusively on dimensions of pedagogy internal to the university and not on its connection with the community. The very important topic of funding for engagement is addressed in chapter 12, but is a disappointingly narrow discussion limited to federal Housing and Urban Development resources.

Chapter 13, written by UWM's past provost John Wanat, and chapter 14, authored by former president Nancy Zimpher, offer valuable suggestions and reflections on academic and institutional leadership associated with committing to being an engaged university. Their thoughts are presented in a well-organized manner and distill lessons about engagement leadership into practical terms.

In summary, *Creating a New Kind of University* provides scholarly contributions to the literature on the theory and practice of engagement particularly because the book addresses institutional engagement, a topic not prevalent in the scholarship of engagement literature. As Percy, Zimpher, and Brukardt (2006, 5) state, “There is no blueprint for this formidable task . . . only lessons to be shared with partners of like mind.” Kudos to this leadership team for taking the time to assemble, reflect, analyze, and share their learning with us.

## References

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## About the Reviewer

- Nancy Franklin, EdD, is the director of Strategic Initiatives for Outreach and Cooperative Extension at the Pennsylvania State University and assistant director of Outreach for Penn State Institutes for Energy and the Environment. Her professional focus, as well as her scholarly interest, centers on distributed regional and thematic engagement. Prior to her current role, Nancy served as Virginia Tech’s Southside regional director of Information Technology and senior director of Programs and Planning at the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research in Danville, Virginia, which garnered the 2007 C. Peter Magrath/W. K. Kellogg Foundation National Engagement Award. She received her doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania.