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Leadership, Engagement, and the Small Liberal Arts College: Albion College and the Smart Community

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Abstract

The keys to collaborative, principled-centered leadership are identified as Albion College's faculty and staff develop a new transformational vision. The success of the envisioning process on campus soon spilled over to a second envisioning process centered in the larger Albion community. Hard-hit by industrial decline, the community of Albion now sees itself as the technologically oriented and balanced Smart Community of the future. The two visions are tied together. Albion College and the city of Albion are part of a single community.

Albion College (Michigan) is engaged in a vast and transformative project, redefining its curriculum and building new student and faculty opportunities. *Liberal Arts at Work: Albion College's Vision for a Liberal Arts Education in the 21ˢᵗ Century* seeks to empower students, faculty, and administrators. The Vision establishes a new interdisciplinary focus to the College's curriculum, expands co-curricular activities, and commits generous funding to support student research and the activities of new interdisciplinary study centers and preprofessional institutes. The Vision further emphasizes community service and the building of new student connections, including connections with the city of Albion and the larger national and global communities.

At Albion, the success of the envisioning process on campus led to a community envisioning process off campus. The result was a new city-college partnership designed to promote the development of the city of Albion as "The Smart Community." Albion College's academic vision—and the College's continuing attractiveness to students—cannot fully be realized without the revitalization and resurgence of the town of Albion.

In *Habits of the Heart,* Robert Bellah and his colleagues (1985) talk about the declining sense of community in the modern-day United States. In contemporary America, an

exaggerated individualism has triumphed. Americans have come to define success increasingly in materialistic and expressive terms, not, as they did a century ago, in terms "of the conventions of one's local community." Having lost the true sense of community, Americans desperately seek intimacy in insular suburbs and other "lifestyle enclaves" with their "narcissism of similarity," a pallid substitutes for a more full, rich, and authentic definition of community that embraces diversity and change.

Too often, our institutions of higher education are lifestyle enclaves set apart from the larger community. The danger is especially inherent in the small liberal arts college with its high tuition. Albion College draws a student body that is largely middle class and suburban, in many ways quite different from the population of the small, working-class, and racially diverse industrial city that surrounds the College.

How can we equip students for the quickly changing, competitive, diverse, and global-ized world of the twenty-first century? Albion's *Liberal Arts at Work* Vision seeks to build connections or bridges between the student and the local and global communities, so students can acquire the understanding as well as the skills necessary to function effectively, ethically, and responsibly in an interconnected world.

Building on Strengths

In seeking to strengthen an ethos of connectedness, institutions of higher education should begin by building on established strengths. At Albion, first and foremost is the student body. The vast majority of Albion students have a record of voluntary service that pre-dates their enrollment at Albion. Albion students turn out in outstanding numbers for a vast array of co-curricular programs, including Special Olympics, City Service Day, Big Brothers and Big Sisters programs, after-school tutoring, Best Bud-dies, environmental clean-ups, and the Appalachian Service Project (an alternative Spring Break program). Campus fraternities and sororities also initiate service projects. Yet, despite the laudatory nature of all of these contributions, in many ways the engagement of students is quite limited. "One-shot" volunteer experiences and "safe" service projects that lie within the scope of a student's past experience do not really afford a student much opportunity to learn from the people in the larger community.

Albion is also the beneficiary of the activities of Michigan Campus Compact (MCC), an organization that seeks to promote service learning and helps with small-scale financial support for numerous service experiences. MCC funding has nourished a variety of projects at Albion, including a variety of youth mentoring and leadership programs, an oral history project focused on the experience of Albion's large African American community, and the formation of a Model UN Club at the local high school.

While more traditional faculty members have often been critical of service learning, arguing that such activities will draw students away from more traditional coursework and will diminish academic standards, the opposition of a college's faculty to commu-nity engagement should not be taken as a given fact. Faculty resistance to engagement

is likely to be greatest when service learning is perceived to be a new initiative, divorced from the educational mission of the College, imposed from above. As the Albion experience demonstrates, the faculty of a small college will support and proceed with community engagement if they first come to the conclusion that engagement is something that in its own right deserves a place in the liberal arts curriculum of the twenty-first century. Principled-center leadership and an envisioning process that empowers, rather than manipulates, faculty are keys to increasing the acceptance of community engagement at the small liberal arts college.

Building the Vision:
A Principled-Centered Process

Executives can have only a limited impact on their institutions without the full and willing participation of the people throughout the institution. The potential reach of top-down leadership is quite limited, indeed. True leadership works through collaboration and seeks to facilitate and enable the actions of others. As James MacGregor Burns (1978) has identified, *transformational leadership* raises *both* the leader and the follower to a new level, allowing each to expand and make better use of his or her talents and capabilities.

The model of transformational leadership is most appropriate for the engaged college. In their Kellogg Foundation-funded work on leadership for institutional transformation in higher education, Alexander Astin and Helen Astin (2000) advise the change-oriented college president to structure a collaborative process that will release the enormous untapped resources and creative talents of a college's faculty, staff, and students. Astin and Astin (2000) reject "command and control" approaches to leadership. Instead, they identify *collaboration* as not only a more ethical approach but also "a more effective approach because it empowers each individual, engenders trust, and capitalizes on the diverse talents of the group members."

Steven Covey's (1991) popular advocacy of *principled-center leadership* in many ways parallels that of transformational, collaborative leadership. Covey, too, argues that lasting institutional change occurs when leadership serves the needs, and unleashes the creative potential and competency of followers. Like Astin and Astin, Covey observes that "knowledgeable, wholehearted, uninhibited commitment" takes place only when people trust one another and believe in the cause that is to be accomplished.

This, then, becomes the main task of the envisioning process: to build the shared sense of mission and mutual trust that buys wholehearted loyalty and commitment, that reenergizes individuals and sustains action. *Principle-centered leadership* occurs "when the cause or purpose or goal is believed in as deeply by the followers as by the leaders" (Covey 1991). The process by which a vision is built, then, is often as important, if not more important, than the vision that finally results.

A number of Covey's keys to effective, principle-centered leadership (see Covey, 1991: 107-108) provide clues as to how a transformational vision centered on engagement

was established at Albion College:

Persuasion. The principle-center leader does not seek to command but instead shares reasons and rationale and maintains respect for followers' ideas. At Albion, the faculty must be involved in a process that allowed each individual the opportunity to truly understand the need for change, the importance of shaping a more proactive, future-oriented curriculum and college that would meet the needs and interests of today's students. Albion College would have to offer a revised curriculum and new opportunities through the creation of new centers and institutes; failing that, the College would lose its reputation for excellence, enrollments would decline, and the College would be diminished.

But how does a college's faculty come to recognize the need for a new vision based on engagement, connections, and change when many faculty members are so comfortable with their disciplinary perspectives and the usual way of doing things? The largeness of the vision is one key to persuasion.

We are spiritual beings in search of meaning. An enabling, transformational vision cannot be based on material self-interest alone. A transformational vision must identify purposes that lift and ennoble followers, allowing faculty and staff to make greater use of their creative energy than their routinized jobs normally allow (Covey 1991). At Albion, faculty were empowered and encouraged to think outside of the box in identifying a new and appropriate role for the liberal arts College in the technologically-dominated twenty-first century. They were charged with the task of identifying new and creative teaching and research opportunities, including interdisciplinary opportunities to stretch individuals into new fields.

A new and dynamic atmosphere was established on campus at Albion, and previously untapped reservoirs of creativity and energy were now tapped. In this bottom-up process, faculty shaped the creation of the College's new specialized institutes and interdisciplinary centers—including centers in the arts, education, and pre-medical and health care studies that were not even on the table in the initial envisioning sessions.

Patience. The process of building and implementing a vision is time consuming. Faculty members have to be given the time to discover their goals, talents, and even their errors if they are to develop creative and imaginative, even if at times unworkable, proposals. Faculty at Albion, for instance, committed generous time in attempting to discover innovative ways of staffing the new institutes and interdisciplinary centers while respecting the College's tenure policy.

Gentleness and kindness, not harshness. How do you get faculty to buy into a new approach? One key is to treat faculty with respect. It is not enough simply to reward effort and to provide the resources for innovation and experimentation. Faculty will commit to new missions only if they are shown that a leader cares for them and respects their talents, their professionalism, and the job they are doing. The key here is a

politics of abundance, an abundance of love as well as of resources that differs in virtually all aspects from a top-down or "Theory X" approach to management based on the manipulation of rewards and punishments.

Consistency. The principle-centered leader must demonstrate by example that leadership and the envisioning process are not manipulative, cooptive acts. At Albion, a critical point in the envisioning and implementation processes was reached when student enrollments failed to meet the initial levels predicted in the Vision. The administration had promised the faculty three new positions, contingent upon the expected expansion of student enrollments. The College's faculty insisted that the three new positions had to be provided to help with the new curriculum. In response to the faculty's concerns, the three new positions were added according to the time schedule identified in the initial Vision—even though the additional student enrollments had yet to materialize. The College incurred considerable expense. But the action was necessary in order to demonstrate good faith; it served to quell any faculty voices that the Vision was inauthentic and that the entire envisioning process was short-term only, money-driven, enrollment-dominated, and manipulative.

Teachableness and openness. By responding to the faculty's concern over staffing, the Administration also demonstrated what Astin and Astin (2000) argue is a critical key to empathy and effective collaboration: "the cultivation and use of what is probably our most neglected communication skill: *listening*."

The Substance of the Vision

What did this extensive envisioning process yield? *Liberal Arts at Work* affirms that an Albion College education is a series of connections. Students connect not only to faculty and the curriculum, but also to alumni mentors, to traditions of faith and spirituality (appropriate for an open, affirming, and inclusive institution affiliated with the United Methodist Church), and to the city of Albion. The city of Albion, with its ethnic and racial diversity, provides an ideal environment for both faith-based journeys and service learning.

Institutes. *Liberal Arts at Work* sought to develop new College-based institutes (as well as expand old ones) and interdisciplinary centers that would allow faculty and students new opportunities for connection, engagement, and service. For instance, the sponsored internships and research projects of the Institute for the Study of the Environment allow students to focus on both local concerns (such as the water quality of the Kalamazoo River) and regional issues (including an examination of the Great Lakes Watershed and questions of environmental justice in nearby cities). Field trips have even challenged students to explore such national issues as the conflict between agricultural, urban, and environmental interests in the shrinking Florida Everglades.
The College's long-standing Gerald R. Ford Institute for Public Policy and Service (FI) and the College's Sleight Leadership Program now sponsor Civic Internship and Leadership Awards (of $5,000 per student) to enable FI students to spend the summer

after their sophomore year in paid internships with local service organizations. These awards allow the local community, with its wealth of service-learning sites, to compete with the lure of more glamorous off-campus programs based in Chicago, Philadelphia, New York, Washington, and London.

The Carl A. Gerstacker Institute for Professional Management similarly affords students paid internship opportunities with local businesses, nonprofit organizations, and city hall. Gerstacker students provide local organizations with the technical assistance and personpower necessary for the development of business plans, strategic plans, new marketing initiatives, and a miscellany of managerial tasks. In return, Gerstacker students develop a sense of "corporate volunteerism" and prepare for "third sector" leadership roles that will complement their chosen business careers.

Albion's Liberal Arts Institute for Pre-Medical and Health Care studies (PMHCS) offers volunteer experiences and internships, including endowed internships in the junior and senior years with local and regional health care providers. PMHCS also draws the student's attention to issues of quality, access, and equity in the United States' evolving health care system. Similar to PMHCS, the Fritz Shurmer Education Institute takes education students beyond the basics of teacher certification by engaging them in the broader issues of educational policy and reform.

The Foundation for Undergraduate Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity (FURSCA). Closely aligned with the new Institutes, the Foundation for Undergraduate Research uses its endowed monies to help facilitate a wide variety of research experiences, including service-learning projects. FURSCA helps to support student research (under the guidance of faculty mentorship) in the local community on issues related to the environment, education, human services, race relations, and business and industrial development.

Centers for Interdisciplinary Study. Endowed at a minimum of $5 million each, four new Centers for Interdisciplinary Study (CIS)—in Expression in the Arts; in History and Culture; in Meaning and Value; and in Ethnic, Gender, and Global Studies (CISEGG)—facilitate the development of first-year seminars, speaker programs, new courses, and co-curricular activities. CISEGG, in particular, is designed to work synergistically with the city of Albion in experiential learning. A declining industrial community with a rich racial and ethnic legacy and history, the town of Albion offers a unique setting for a liberal arts college, allowing for student involvement with a community facing the challenges of the transition to a post-industrial economy. Students working with faculty, for instance, have traced the "racial legacies" of Albion. CISEGG is also actively involved in community and campus programming of the activities associated with Martin Luther King's birthday, Hispanic Heritage Month, Black History Month, Anna Howard Shaw Week, and the International Week. Working with other centers, CISEGG has also helped to sponsor a variety of service projects,

including a student/faculty work trip to Wroclaw, Poland, for the restoration of that city's Jewish cemetery, largely abandoned and overgrown after the Holocaust.

A Modernized Curriculum. Four category requirements in Albion's new curriculum—Environmental Studies, Ethnic Studies, Gender Studies, and Global Studies—help acquaint Albion students with issues that are integral to living in a complex and interdependent world. First-year experience courses, capstone courses, and the development of student portfolios all provide vehicles for incorporating new engagement opportunities into the curriculum. In one set of team-taught first-year Justice seminars, for instance, students were given the opportunity to visit community organizations on the south side of Chicago where they were able to put a real-world face on more abstract justice issues.

Envisioning the College and the City: Albion, The Smart Community

The Vision was rolled out at a special community breakfast on May 13, 1999. The announcement was dovetailed with the community's annual flower planting/beautification effort. Nearly 900 people showed up for breakfast and to help with the planting! A job that normally takes two weeks was completed that Saturday by 3:00 in the afternoon!

After the College's successful envisioning process produced *Liberal Arts at Work,* several community leaders approached the College President and asked him to lead a community-wide envisioning process. The community envisioning processes included persons who played key roles in the community (mayor, city manager, superintendent of schools, college president, chief of public safety, and the heads of the Chamber of Commerce, the economic development association, and the local ministerial association) and grassroots community leaders. The group met monthly from August through April, with meetings typically running six to eight hours. A process of envisioning/strategic planning led to an enthusiastic consensus around the concept of a Smart Community.

In the envisioning process, the citizens of Albion saw a number of strengths upon which they could build: the genuine warmth and friendliness of the community; the city's rich cultural diversity; Albionites' commitment to their children; the College; and the city's incredible infrastructure for information technology. The citizens came to believe, "Albion is destined to serve as a model for small town development." They willingly faced down the risk of ridicule as they began to envision the city's future as Albion, The Smart Community. As they concluded, "The citizens of Albion, Michigan believe this vision of The Smart Community is a marvelous opportunity to promote the Greater Albion area as a technologically advanced community, but also a place that makes smart decisions."

The citizens of Albion envisioned a dynamic and progressive future built around what

they saw to be 44 characteristics of a smart community, including access to worldwide technology for all citizens, support of local businesses, a commitment to lifelong health and wellness, promotion of the arts, protection of the natural environment, and the championing of a strong ethic of volunteerism. Twelve action teams were formed to develop operational plans to realize the announced objectives. Their actions were coordinated by the Greater Albion Alliance.

The College's efforts were aided by the Knight Foundation, which commended Albion College for the "collaborative spirit in which it pursued highly complementary campus and community visions," in working together to produce Michigan's future Smart Community. The Foundation awarded Albion $150,000 as one of five colleges across the nation to receive a 1999 Presidential Leadership Grant.

In August 2000, Albion College used half of the Presidential Leadership Grant to leverage a grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation to hire an Executive Director of the Greater Albion Alliance, a community development official whose job it is to shepherd the Smart Community vision into reality. Although the community envisioning process had produced excellent ideas, the process had begun to lose momentum. The Knight Foundation and Kellogg Foundation grants came to the College at a fortuitous time. They enabled the College to secure a community developer for a two-year commitment to help "shepherd" the process. In essence, the College as Citizen had secured $225,000 in external funds, of which $150,000 was devoted exclusively to community revitalization projects that promised little direct benefit to the College.

The Smart Community vision produced immediate and tangible results. The Arts and Culture action team conceived the museum *Kids 'N Stuff: An Interactive Experience for Kids*. The region's lack of a children's museum had emerged time and again in the community vision process. A new facility based in Albion would help promote education and abet the revitalization of the old downtown. In October 2000, a $600,000 capital campaign on behalf of the museum was launched. Students in the College's Ford Institute assisted in cleaning up and painting the *Kids 'N Stuff* building, and even made fact-finding trips to Ann Arbor and Marquette to observe the operation of similar facilities.

Good results were also achieved in the areas of town-gown relations and in race relations. The work of the Diversity and Moral and Spiritual Action Teams led to the Henry Study (named after Kenneth and Deanna Henry, the study's research co-directors) on racism, both on campus and in the larger community. The study also focused on the steps that the College and the community were taking in response to this problem. Albion College also has joined in partnership with its neighbor Starr Commonwealth, an institution of international renown for its efforts in helping troubled youth, providing support for Starr's Institute on Healing Racism.

To bring community revitalization efforts to a new level, the College applied for a major grant from the Rollin M. Gerstacker Foundation of Midland, Michigan. Over the

years, the Gerstacker Foundation has been quite generous in its support of Albion. This time, however, the College, in the preliminary stages of a capital campaign, did not simply ask for $1 million to expand the activities of its Gerstacker Institute in Professional Management; the College also sought an additional $1 million to champion new revitalization ventures that would have a significant economic and cultural impact on the larger community. The announcement of the award—$200,000 a year for the next five years—was made and greeted with great excitement at the Annual Albion College-Community Day, a time when the College and the Chamber of Commerce jointly sponsor a free community picnic and football game.

The College used half of the first year's money as a challenge grant to raise an additional $200,000 to establish the to *Kids 'N Stuff* museum. The other half was devoted to a new technology incubator, an initiative of the Albion Economic Development Commission. Located in the predominantly African-American side of the city, the incubator will also serve as a resource center for minority entrepreneurship.

Kids 'N Stuff and other College-supported activities are intended to have a significant impact on economic development, generating significant traffic flow that will add to the revitalization of downtown Albion. New actions are also being undertaken to promote the opening of a coffee house/bookstore and possibly even a new restaurant on Albion's main street. Albion College cannot be truly attractive to prospective students and their parents in the absence of a dynamic and attractive city.

Two envisioning processes, one on campus and one in the community, have produced one interconnected vision. In the place of town/gown animosities and suspicions, there is an increased sense of a shared fate. Albion College and its town have begun to more closely approximate Bellah's notion of an authentic community.

Shared Communities, Shared Fates:
Small Colleges and their Communities

The Smart Community is a work-in-progress. While too early to claim victory, there are tangible (and intangible) evidences of success in the process that produced the Vision and its implementation. There are also lessons learned that are worthy of replication—and avoidance—as other small communities seek revitalization and transformation, with the local liberal arts college serving as a catalyst. There are an estimated 800 small liberal arts colleges in communities with a population under 25,000; these vital and vibrant institutions hold promise for a modest transformation of American society.

The liberal arts tradition seeks to prepare men and women for lives of meaning and purpose. Inherent within this core mission is the importance of civic engagement and its manifestation in civic responsibility. At its heart, the Smart Community is a living example of civic engagement and civic responsibility on the part of an institution of higher learning.

What are the lessons that can be learned in the development of Albion, The Smart Community? Once again, Astin and Astin's *Leadership Reconsidered: Engaging Higher Education in Social Change* provides a helpful framework by pointing to five essential group qualities that were evident in the Albion change effort:

(1) Shared Purpose. The Smart Community emanated from a deep and abiding commitment of civic leaders to build upon the best that the community had to offer—inherent strengths, passionate hopes and expectations, genuine friendliness and affection, and a nobility of purpose. Like many small American towns, the citizens of Albion love their community and truly want to see it prosper. The Smart Community process tapped into that shared sense of hope and promise–mobilizing a belief in the dignity and nobility of the human condition, generating a new sense of excitement and optimism that had heretofore lain dormant for fear of disapproval and disappointment if voiced openly.

Albion, like many small towns, suffers from low self-esteem. Too often, as the comic strip character Pogo observes, "We have found the enemy and it is us." To a great extent, for many years, possibly even generations, Albion has been its own worst enemy. There were many community initiatives over the years. Many stumbled and failed, but others succeeded. Yet every success was met with, "Yes, but . . .," with a list of complaints and negatives to offset the positives. Neighboring communities viewed our diversity as a negative and at times even convinced us that was the case. Now, citizens in Albion are taking pride in their achievements and taking risks in generating new ideas. Albionites have now shown a new ability to even take unfortunate events (even such trivialities as the refusal of a Taco Bell owner to meet the planning requirements for locating in the city) in stride without slipping back into negativism and self-pity.

(2) Collaboration. Both the committee that developed the Vision and the citizens who are embracing it cut across racial, ethnic, economic, and geographic lines. The issues that divide us were left at the door as citizens rolled up their sleeves and went about the business of making improvements. Lest the collaboration be viewed as coerced or as entailing an unquestioned allegiance to a single idea, differing voices were heard. A sense of moral responsibility and social obligation compelled people to listen empathically and to absorb the hopes, dreams, fears, and apprehensions of others. Sincerity in both speaking and listening produced a depth of understanding and mutual respect and appreciation among the members of the envisioning committee. Equally important, these representatives went back to their respective formal and informal groups and organizations, communicating a message of mutual respect and cooperation. The members of the envisioning process rejected the previous mode of stereotyping each new idea as a proposal designed to advance the special interests of a narrow segment of the community. In its place arose a new focus on getting things done that were good and right for the community.

(3) Disagreement with Respect. The envisioning process included some heated

debate about priorities and focus. We were able to argue effectively, because we maintained respect for one another. Collaboration and disagreement with respect are yoked together for an important reason. Absent empathy, shared values and purposes soon become hollow and self-serving. But empathy alone can be emotionally draining, even debilitating. Collaboration transforms empathy into action. Projects like the *Kids 'N Stuff Children's Museum* become rallying cries for those who cared about children but who wanted to do something more than just care. In Albion, the doers and the feelers found common bond, and the doers did it with more feeling and the feelers became more pro-active.

(4) Division of Labor. Albion is a place for big dreams and small victories. Norman Couzens (1981: 49) said, "Dreams put human beings in motion. If the dream is big enough, it can overcome happenstance and paradox, and will be far more powerful than the practical ideas of men and women with no poetry in their souls." The Smart Community is the big dream of people with poetry in their souls. It motivates people to think beyond modest improvements and to envision a town that can be significantly better. The sheer act of dreaming something greater builds a sense of excitement and momentum. Absent any tangible evidence of progress or success, however, the dream can quickly fade and by replaced by a sense of disillusionment, cynicism, and hopelessness.

So Albion needed some modest and immediate successes, small victories to testify to the merit of its big dreams. The best way to achieve some small victories is through the division of labor, channeling resources—people, money, and spirit—into projects that are likely to be successful. The result was several small and big victories: *Kids 'N Stuff*, the Gerstacker grant, the technology incubator, the diversity statement, and even the beginnings of a move to develop Albion as a retirement destination.

The College also led an effort to apply to be a Hewlett-Packard "Digital Village." The grant would have provided over $5 million for the hardware and technical expertise necessary to help transform Albion into a high-tech community. Thirty-five different community groups worked collaboratively to put the grant together. Albion made the first two cuts in the selection process, from 800 applicants to 200, and from 200 to 23 semi-finalists. Interestingly and bittersweet, Albion was not selected to be one of six finalists. HP believed that the community had already made quite impressive progress on the path to being the Smart Community; the company wanted to help a community that "was not so far along the road to success." While we did not receive the grant, the process did not result in failure. The Albion community plans to "unbundle" key components of the Digital Village plan that will then be submitted as grant applications to other funding sources.

(5) Learning Environment. Undergirding our civic engagement and social responsibility is Albion's commitment to be a learning environment. At Albion, the learning environment embraces the larger community as well as the College campus. On campus, the liberal arts are at work, transforming individual lives of students. In The Smart Community, the liberal arts are at work transforming the workplace. Albion College desires to be a

learning environment for the entire community and to transform the way people deal with information, ideas, dreams, and expectations. By engaging our students, faculty, and staff, and by transforming individuals and the workplace, the liberal arts will help transform society.

Conclusion

Leadership implies risk-taking, the potential for both success and failure. When a small liberal arts college attempts to reach out to its community, the process is fraught with risk, especially the risk of failure. Indeed, despite all of the College's efforts, there is still suspicion of the College's motives. Town/gown relations, while improving, will always be tenuous, long to improve and quick to deteriorate. But the alternative is not to try, and that is simply unacceptable for a liberal arts institution committed to prepare students for civic responsibility. In the competitive world of higher education, a college must also be active in helping to build a community attractive to students.

The joint college and community visions have prospered. The challenge, though, will be in sustaining the effort. Momentum is fickle and needs frequent revitalization. While the Knight and Kellogg grants provided a much-needed boost, there will be a continuous need to reenergize in the process of community building. For instance, the twelve action teams are difficult to manage; they also require a considerable time commitment from citizens. As a result, some are already floundering.

Today's student is attracted to the personal nature of one-on-one service. As a result, civic engagement tends to be social service-oriented. Yet, the greatest need for small, struggling towns often is not the provision of social services but the challenge of economic development. Already, leaders in Albion are wondering if greater emphasis should be given to technology issues and economic development concerns instead of bolstering spiritual and moral leadership and understanding issues of diversity and justice. Balancing concerns for social renewal and economic development, both vital to a community's future, is not easy; while the two are not mutually exclusive, there will always be a dynamic tension between the two.

The envisioning and implementation processes are fraught with risks. But the promise of results is also real, and the envisioning process can be empowering. As Norman Cousins observes, if the dream is truly good enough, the end product will be far more solid than the practical designs of men and women with no poetry in their souls.

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