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# What is the Future of Civic Engagement in Higher Education? Next Generation Engagement: Undergraduates, Graduate Students and Early Career Faculty

Cecilia Orphan

*American Democracy Project*

Tim Eatman

*Syracuse University*

Adam Bush

*College Unbound and Imaging America*

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New England Resource Center for Higher Education

A RESOURCE CENTER AT THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON

NERCHE is committed to collaborative change processes in higher education to address social justice in a diverse democracy.

## **What is the Future of Civic Engagement in Higher Education? Next Generation Engagement: Undergraduates, Graduate Students and Early Career Faculty**

American, Democracy Project, Orlando, Florida

June 4, 2011

The Next Generation Engagement Project comprises a cross-disciplinary collection of civically engaged scholars at various stages in their careers. They are exploring new ways to conceptualize the development of the next generation of leaders of civic engagement in higher education. The Next Generation Scholars share their insights, interests, and challenges, and they engage participants in an exploration of strategies for advancing the next generation of engaged scholars and practitioners. Through collaborative book projects, civic seminars and research on the arc of the career of the publicly engaged scholar, the participants have worked over the past year to embody the future of civic engagement through the development of interdisciplinary structures, mentorship for graduate students and early career faculty, development of graduate programs, and the support of early career faculty.

For more on NERCHE's Next Generation Engagement Project: <http://www.nerche.org/>

For more on the work of the American Democracy Project:  
<http://www.aascu.org/programs/adp/about.htm>

For more information on Imagining America: [www.imaginingamerica.org](http://www.imaginingamerica.org)

To learn more about IA's Publicly Engaged Scholar Research: <http://www.ia-research.org>

To learn more about College Unbound: [www.collegeunbound.org](http://www.collegeunbound.org)

### Contact Information

**Cecilia Orphan**, American Democracy Project, AASCU  
[OrphanC@aascu.org](mailto:OrphanC@aascu.org)

**Tim Eatman**, Syracuse University and Imagining America  
[tkeatman@syr.edu](mailto:tkeatman@syr.edu), [www.timothykeatman.com](http://www.timothykeatman.com)

**Adam Bush**, College Unbound and Imagining America  
[abush@bigpicturelearning.org](mailto:abush@bigpicturelearning.org)

## **About the PES Study**

As the role of higher education institutions changes within the present age there is an increasing need to understand the implications of that evolution as it relates to the citizenry of academe. Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life (IA) assembled a research team to explore how education can meet the reciprocal vision of university as a public good (Ernest L Boyer, 1996; Cantor, 2008) through publicly engaged scholarship (PES). IA defines public scholarship as, “as scholarly or creative activity that joins serious intellectual endeavor with a commitment to public practice and public consequence” (Eatman, 2009, p. 18). This Syracuse University IRB approved study seeks to develop profiles of publicly engaged scholars to learn about their educational and career aspirations, including reflections on identity development and motivations for PES.

Nancy Cantor, Chancellor and President of Syracuse University, champions a vision of “Scholarship in Action” within the campus and community of Central New York. She maintains that academic institutions should be social actors on both local and national levels. “Just as the Morrill Act of the 19th century acknowledged the family farm as the anchor of American social life and the source of scientific innovation, we need a 21st-century equivalent that acknowledges the role that schools must play today in our communities, our democracy, and our global economy” (Cantor, 2008). In order to facilitate such a transformation, the “scope of scholarship should be broadened to include” the: discovery, integration, application, and the teaching of knowledge, while rewarding “all forms of scholarship” (Ernest L Boyer, 1996, p. 138).

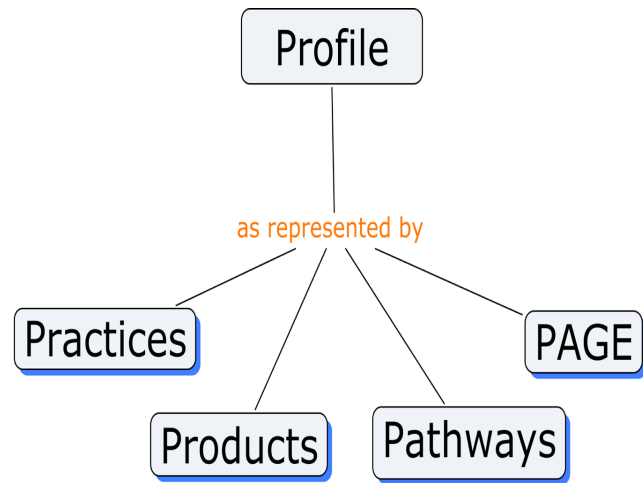
There is much that institutions of higher education need to learn about the aspirations and decisions of the evolving citizenry of knowledge creators identified within this research as publicly engaged scholars. Characterized by a different mindset about knowledge creation than their counterparts from previous generations, publicly engaged scholars and practitioners work both within and outside academe but see their work as dependent upon robust connections between campuses and communities in which they are located. This work holds particular significance for the development of graduate programs and attending to the arc of the career for engaged scholars in the present era.

## **Study Design**

This mixed methods study analyzed approximately 460 responses to a 54 item (mostly multiple-choice or likert scale questions) web-based survey and 60 structured telephone interviews with participants who self-identified as graduate students or early career professionals (roughly 5 years out of graduate work) and publicly engaged scholars. The research team performed descriptive and correlation analyses on the survey data using SPSS. Grounded theory guided the explication of interview data, which two members of the research team coded individually using the software application Atlas.ti. Team members then came together to discuss their findings and enhance validity within their results. The data revealed early career publicly engaged scholars’ perspectives on what motivates this scholarship, what kind of supports are necessary, and how publicly engaged scholars develop.

## Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

- Continuum of scholarship (Doberneck, Glass, & Schweitzer, 2010; Ellison & Eatman, 2008)
- Difference of perspectives about scholarly work and practice between PES and Traditional mindset - including the production of scholarly artifacts, peers, importance of projects, career aspirations, role of scholarship etc. (Ernest L. Boyer, 1990, 1995; O'Meara, 2010)
- Agency (academic freedom)
- Institutional change (Ernest L. Boyer, 1990, 1995; Calhoun, 2006; Checkoway, 2001; Ellison & Eatman, 2008; O'Meara, 2010)



## Selected Key Research Questions

1. What profile(s) best suit the emerging publicly engaged scholar in the cultural disciplines (arts humanities & design)?
  - a. Origins of identification, philosophies
  - b. Types of interests, projects, and work.
2. How does graduate education prepare students to become publicly engaged scholars?
  - a. Mentoring
  - b. Training in engaged research methods
  - c. Culture of public purpose and legitimacy of community engagement
3. What professional pathways exist for publicly engaged scholars?
  - a. Range of options
  - b. Factors relating to sector choice
  - c. Risks and benefits of particular pathway choices
  - d. What *kinds* of programmatic resources and structures do students interested in public scholarship consider most effective or influential?

### Demographics:

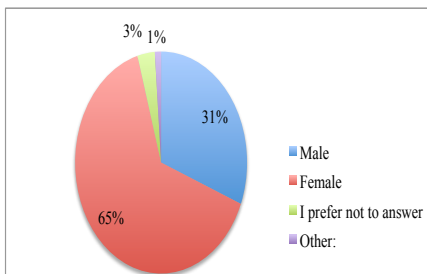


Figure 1. PES survey participants by gender.

### Preliminary survey results

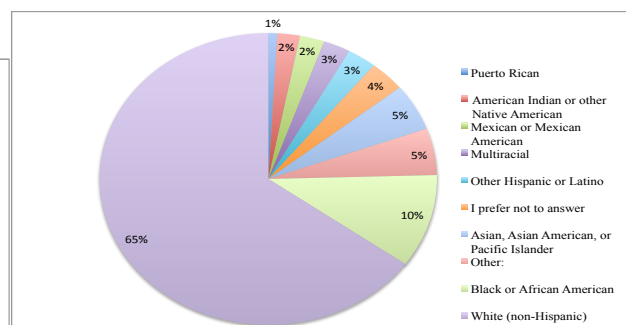


Figure 2. PES survey participants by race.

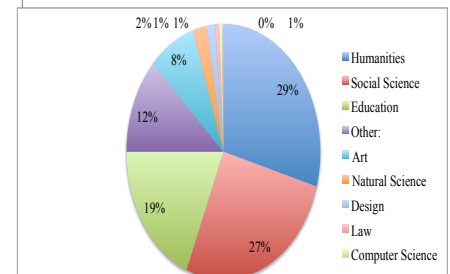


Figure 3. PES survey participants by field.

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## Identity:

Multiple choice - multiple answers (check)

*Question*

As you reflect on your life today, as a publicly engaged scholar, how would you currently define yourself? (Select all that apply.)

Total responses (N): 450      Did not respond: 0

<i>Numeric value</i>	<i>Answer</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1	Activist	205	45.56%
2	Artist	131	29.11%
3	Interdisciplinary	288	64.00%
4	Learner	335	74.44%
5	Mentee	175	38.89%
6	Mentor	238	52.89%
7	Researcher	329	73.11%
8	Scholar	330	73.33%
9	Student	241	53.56%
10	Teacher	325	72.22%
11	Undecided	12	2.67%
12	Other:	71	15.78%

## Wordle Keyword - Other



## Journey:

Multiple choice - multiple answers (check)

*Question*

To better understand the development of publicly engaged scholars, like yourself, we want to learn about the journey that led you to your current work. What experiences shaped your interest in publicly engaged scholarship in a significant way? (Select all that apply.)

Total responses (N): 450      Did not respond: 0

<i>Numeric value</i>	<i>Answer</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1	Secondary school experience(s)	132	29.33%
2	Collegiate experiences	241	53.56%
3	Graduate work	343	76.22%
4	Personal or professional mentor(s)	284	63.11%
5	Religious involvements	105	23.33%
6	Cultural involvements	240	53.33%
7	Community service	274	60.89%
8	Work or internship experience	206	45.78%
9	Family members and friends	176	39.11%
10	Other:	94	20.89%

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## Motivations:

Question		Multiple choice - multiple answers (check)	
What do you hope to accomplish through your engaged scholarship? (Select all that apply.)			
		Total responses (N): 445	Did not respond: 5
Numeric value	Answer	Frequency	Percentage
1	Promote social justice	331	74.38%
2	Enact or support civic leadership	177	39.78%
3	Enact or support civic engagement and responsibility	302	67.87%
4	Social entrepreneurialism	63	14.16%
5	Improve pedagogy	270	60.67%
6	Enhance research methodology	178	40.00%
7	Expand knowledge, methods, and/or scholarship in the discipline	345	77.53%
8	Expand knowledge, methods, and/or scholarship in the public	320	71.91%
9	Provide support/mentorship for your research population	209	46.97%
10	Personal growth	269	60.45%
11	Other:	37	8.31%

Question		Multiple choice - one answer (button)	
How important was/is it for you to find a position after graduate school at a college or university that values publicly engaged scholarship?			
		Total responses (N): 447	Did not respond: 3
Numeric value	Answer	Frequency	Percentage
1	Not important	42	9.40%
2	Somewhat important	71	15.88%
3	Important	90	20.13%
4	Very important	125	27.96%
5	Extremely important	119	26.62%

## Key Preliminary Data points from Structured Phone Interviews

### Emergent Typologies:

- Profile 1 – Cradle to community scholar (Sarah)
- Profile 2 – Artist as engaged scholar (Cynthia)
- Profile 3 – Teacher to Engaged Scholar (Tomas)
- Profile 4 – Program coordinator to engaged administrator/scholar (Selinda)
- (Profile 5) – Engaged Interdisciplinary
- (Profile 6) – Activist to Scholar
- (Profile 7) – Engaged Pragmatist

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