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Scholarship in Action: Remapping Higher Education

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Anna and Samuel Pinanski Lecture
 Wellesley College
 April 20, 2011

Scholarship in Action: Remapping Higher Education
 Chancellor Nancy Cantor



I'm very happy to be invited to speak with you on this beautiful campus at a time of year when all things seem possible. Warmer days and graduation are just ahead, and the air is full of promise. It's a good moment to applaud the Wellesley "Women Who Will" make a difference in the world. It's also a chance to consider how our institutions themselves---Wellesley College and Syracuse University---can make a difference, because all colleges and universities---public or private, large or small, urban or rural--have a mandate to be a public good.

Especially now, when we can stand it because we're feeling optimistic, we need to keep in mind that tragic and failed worlds exist simultaneously with ours, whether we perceive them or not. The great poem "Musée des Beaux Arts" written by W.H. Auden and inspired by Bruegel's "Landscape of the Fall of Icarus," captures this truth: "About suffering they were never wrong,/The Old Masters; how well they understood/Its human position; how it takes place/While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking dully along;"



As the boy Icarus falls into the sea, Auden observes “how everything turns away/Quite leisurely from the disaster; the ploughman may/Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,/But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone/As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green/Water; and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen/Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,/had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.”

Too often, the human position is not to see suffering, not to understand its cause, and not to act upon it. We have something else to do, and we travel on. If Icarus doesn't fall directly on our heads, we don't notice him. Too often, we can't even locate the world where we *can* make a difference. We'd like to---and it's all around us---but it's not on our maps.

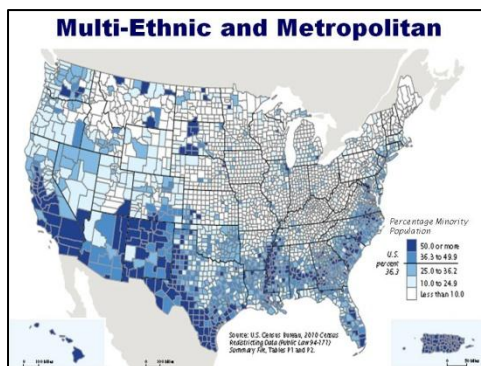
What I want to say to you is that higher education *must* make a difference. We must rethink our positions, must change our maps. We need to reorient our scholarship and our teaching---our people, our psyches, our resources, and our campuses--- to make higher education more relevant and authentic---to make it excellent in the truest sense of the word.

Scholarship in Action is one way to do this, a vision of higher education that prepares students *for the world, in the world*, with a sense of social responsibility for its failures and solutions for its future. Scholarship in Action opens up the university to learning and scholarship through deep academic engagement with many outside partners to address the grand problems, the critical social issues of our day in which the big and the little, the blatant and the hidden, and the local and the global are inevitably intertwined.

Diversity is Central

To restructure and reorient our colleges and universities---and I would argue that this is something we *must* do---we need to begin with a central institutional commitment to diversity in its broadest and most thorough-going form. Diversity must be the surface on which all our maps are drawn.

We can start with student access, taking an affirmative approach to tapping a huge and growing pool of talent that is undergoing dramatic changes and demands our attention. The population trends tell part of the story.



In February, the Census Bureau reported for *the first time ever* that fewer than half of the youngest group they count--- the three-year-olds---are white. As William H. Frey, a senior fellow in the Metropolitan Policy Program at the Brookings Institution observed, these statistics “finally confirm the beginning of an oft-predicted trend---a truly multiethnic minority school age population that will continue to pour into our grade schools, high schools, and beyond in the coming decade.” In the pre-k and kindergarten populations of eight states and the District of Columbia the minority are already in the majority.¹

What’s more, they are coming from metropolitan areas. As the Brookings Institution has reported, the 100 metropolitan areas that take up only 12 percent of our land mass encompass two-thirds of our population and produce 75 percent of our gross domestic product.² In 47 out of the 50 states, metropolitan areas generate the majority of state economic impact.³ Our campuses may be leafy and green, but we are an urban nation.

And in these hard economic times, we must reconfigure ways to welcome and support students who have struggled to reach us: a fast-growing population of students who will be the first in their families to go to college, the sons and daughters of newly immigrated families, veterans returning from post 9/11 conflicts, and students who are now in inner city and rural schools that are often under-resourced.

As we consider our changing demographics, it is surely time to ask whether our lens for admissions needs some adjustment. As selective colleges and universities, we have prospered by defining excellence and quality largely by exclusion – the better we are, the more we reject and the fewer we reach. Today, as the world changes before our very eyes, it’s time to revise our maps to include the whole pool of talent, not just part.

Say Yes to Education

If we are to reach more of the full talent pool in our nation and beyond, we also need to collaborate with our K-12 schools to change the odds for students who could surely succeed in college if only they had opportunities from the start. We can do this by building seamless connections between higher education and our urban public school districts, opening new roads to higher education that make the large numbers of talented children who are now beyond our reach believe that they, too, can thrive in college and beyond. Such an effort is underway in my own struggling rust-belt city.

¹ William H. Frey, “A Demographic Tipping Point Among America’s Three-Year-Olds,” *State of Metropolitan America* 26, The Brookings Institution (7 Feb. 2011) online at: http://brookings.edu/opinions/2011/0207_population_frey.aspx accessed 9 Feb. 2011

² Bruce Katz, “Delivering the next American Economy: From Macro Vision to Metro Action,” remarks delivered at the Global Metro Summit, Chicago, Illinois, December 8, 2010.

³ Reuters News Agency, “Cities economic driver of most states: study,” Feb. 24, 2011 online at <http://www.reuters.com/assets/print?aid=USTRE71N8ET20110224>, accessed April 6, 2011



Say Yes to Education is one of our largest and most ambitious institutional ventures into Scholarship in Action. It's a collaboration to alter the life course of the 21,000 children in the Syracuse City School District, most who don't even make it to graduation. The University and the School District have entered into a precedent-setting partnership with the Say Yes to Education Foundation to dramatically increase the rate at which our city's students attend college. The Foundation has succeeded on a smaller scale in other cities. For the first time, we are scaling up to include an entire district.

Taking an inclusive mind-set, we attribute the persistent "achievement gap" between urban students and their suburban peers---the grades, test scores, dropout rates---not to the potential of the children but to an "opportunity" gap. Too many urban students have been denied the academic and social supports and enrichment experiences that lead to success in school and the expectation of higher education. But we do not have to accept this.

In Syracuse, Say Yes is closing the opportunity gap by providing crucial, comprehensive support to our public school students and their families, addressing many of the academic and social issues, starting in kindergarten, that so often serve as insurmountable barriers on the path to college. We're revamping curriculum throughout the district and extending time-on-task with free after-school programs and summer camps. We've dramatically reduced caseloads for school social workers. Five private law firms and five nonprofits are providing free legal assistance to District families, and County health and mental health practitioners are spreading out across the district.

To remove a giant road block to college--- the cost---Say Yes is offering all graduates of Syracuse city high schools access to tuition support at two dozen private institutions, including SU, and all the campuses of SUNY/CUNY. In the last two years, we have sent about 1,000 Say Yes students to college. The best is yet to come, because it will take another 10 years for the first Say Yes kindergartners to experience the program all the way through. We are re-mapping the future of the entire community via the expectations of and opportunities for the children – the next generation of talented citizens and leaders.

Education as Citizenship

Many of our students and faculty members from disciplines all across campus have joined in this project with our School of Education, getting deeply involved with Say Yes. It speaks to the philosopher of education David Labaree's reminder that in our contemporary world of zero-sum competition, a more collective vision of education can provide socially useful learning that can be shared by all beyond any particular specialization.⁴

Scholarship in Action itself is a profoundly *social* view of "education as citizenship." This concept of citizenship is rooted as much in our democratic practices and the responsibilities of social living as it is in our individual rights and personal freedoms. It is more about an outward gaze than an inward reflection; more about public good than private gain. It speaks to John Dewey's characterization of democracy as a mode of associated living and education as a social experience.⁵

This vision asks our students, our faculty members, and campus professionals to acknowledge their interdependence with this world and to de-center from their own journeys of discovery to fully engage a world that appears to be at our virtual fingertips but is actually so distant, divided, complex, and elusive that all of us, as individuals and as institutions, are struggling to understand our positions in it.

Scholarship in Action requires institutional as well as individual citizenship. As Susan Sturm, a wonderful social legal theorist at Columbia suggests, it is time for colleges and universities to consider our public roles as institutional citizens, engaging simultaneously with the "sticky" issues of our communities and with a more assertive embrace of full participation within and without our institutions.

We are "in and of that world," but that is not sufficient. We need to confront and understand its complexity, how we are located within it, and how to become a partner in it rather than rule over it, minister to it, or assimilate it to us. At every level of the university, we are compelled to re-examine our assumptions and shift our habits of mind beyond our familiar positions of independence, leadership, and even our own expertise.

For these journeys, the old maps will not do. They are rather like the distorted world maps of early European explorers who were much less concerned with geography than with power. Huge continents were relatively small, and Westerners didn't map some countries at all. As recently as 1935, when the author Graham Greene travelled to Africa, he wrote that a U. S. War Department map of the interior of Liberia, which had been an independent republic since 1847, showed a blank space marked "Cannibals."⁶ Today it's all too easy to look through our own lens at a terrain of vast injustice and inequality and regard it as too distant and too different from our own. We need a different, less ego-centric lens, to re-chart even our closest environs. Here, I'll digress for a moment to illustrate with our re-mapping of Syracuse.

⁴ David Labaree. *How to Succeed in School Without Really Learning; The Credentials Race in American Education* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997) 2.

⁵ John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 1916) 87.

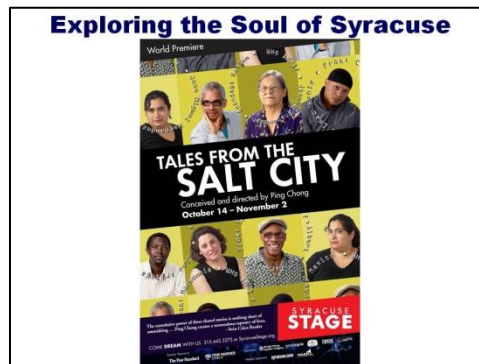
⁶ Graham Greene, *Journey Without Maps* (London: Penguin Books, 2006),42.

Exploring the Soul of a City

Shortly after I arrived at SU, we undertook an effort to understand the landscape in which the university found itself, an older industrial city with a proud history that had been bleeding jobs and population for decades. The university and a giant medical center sat on the top of a hill overlooking downtown and separated from it by an interstate highway. We were a 10 minute walk and yet often worlds apart.

For a year, university faculty and students and staff talked with each other and with a wide range of people in the community, from neighborhood residents to government officials, foundations, business owners, schools, historians, arts and social service organizations, and local churches. We called it “Exploring the Soul of Syracuse,” and we made a big effort to listen.

We heard a litany of poverty, unemployment, failing schools, homelessness, and blight. We also found talent, courage, energy, and hope, and we realized that both the university and the region have an amazing history of innovation and a passion for justice. SU is a private institution that never endorsed religious quotas. After World War II, we tripled our enrollment overnight to embrace both the GIs returning from war and the Japanese American students coming from internment camps.



We are situated in a region that has been home to the sovereign Haudenosaunee Nations – whose history of democratic governance, leadership by clan mothers, and environmentalism far pre-dates ours. Fervent suffragist and abolitionist movements put down roots and flourished in our region, and our city came into its own through the miracle of amateur engineering that produced the Erie Canal, even as that manufacturing legacy now stands as a challenge to its prosperity today.

As our year of mutual exploration drew to a close, it was clear to many of us that we needed to rethink our boundaries, to create new and more realistic maps of our location. Context is everything. Although it is not for the faint of heart, we need to change focus, with less of *us* at the center and more of *them*.

In this regard, many colleges and universities have programs in the arts, humanities, design and public communications that are positioned to take this leap, to understand and enact

what writing a different narrative of community might mean, especially if we write it *with* our communities. This is an excellent beginning, and it's possible to reach quickly beyond this to include such diverse disciplines as engineering, entrepreneurship, public diplomacy, and law, as we have done at Syracuse. But let me start with our journalism students and faculty, who re-mapped their vision of Syracuse, and ultimately of themselves and their place in the world.

The Stand: Re-Mapping the Face of a Community

One of many meetings I attended during my first year at Syracuse was held on the South Side, a neighborhood that lies just down the hill from our campus. It took place in a community landmark, the old South Presbyterian Church, where residents told me, “We hate the stories told about us.” In addition to a diet of news stories on crime in their community, they found themselves living underneath billboards that threatened that if they did the crime, they would do the time. They wanted to be seen for more than their problems. They wanted a mirror to reflect more than their worst selves.

I wasn't sure what we could do about it, but universities have people and resources they can always use in new ways. In this case, we had the S. I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, so we reached out to Steve Davis, the chair of newspaper and online journalism. He didn't know the South Side and neither did his students. In those days, many students and faculty regarded it as a no-go zone, if they noticed it at all.

Nonetheless, Professor Davis collaborated with a coalition of Southside residents, and assigned his journalism students to look for stories from the South Side that weren't being reported in the primary local media, first in his regularly scheduled classes and then in Urban Affairs reporting, a class devoted just to the South Side. It was open to journalism students from all backgrounds—including broadcast, magazine, newspaper, and photography. It was a process that required the students to truly *see* the community and those who live and work there.



With help from a grant from *Imagining America*, a national consortium hosted at Syracuse that strives to foster the role of the arts, humanities and cultural disciplines in civic life, they began to produce a free monthly newspaper, *The Stand*, with stories by and about members of the community. From the very first, *The Stand* offered free weekend workshops on interviewing, telling a story, and feature writing. It encouraged high school students to get

involved. They wrote about subjects that were big and small, from racial profiling to ways that our gigantic snowfalls present opportunities for businesses and hazards for pedestrians.

The Stand promotes community life with bright, easy to read community calendars and an interactive multimedia newspaper website, and it reflects the rich variety of life on the South Side. Last semester, in 2- and 3-minute videos, the staff documented small slices of the lives of a dozen residents: the teen-ager who has trained horses since he was 13, the beauty shop owner who observes, “Your hair is how you feel. I feel purple today.”

The quality of the writing from both our students and the resident-journalists has soared. Olivia Harrison, a high school student and South Side resident, interviewed Jeramie White, who lost his mother at the age of 7, spiraled in and out of trouble, was shot five times, and will be the first in his family to graduate from college: “I fell in love with the streets,” White remembered. “Just got addicted to the street life. I had to take care of myself.” Harrison observed, “The problem is the streets have an expiration date, and being shot five times, White’s clock was definitely ticking.” It would be hard to find a pro who could write that better, at least that’s what my colleague Jo Thomas, now retired from *The New York Times*, said when she read it.

Last winter, Professor Davis added a global dimension to his students’ South Side experience by taking some of them to Grahamstown, South Africa, a city similar in size to Syracuse, with a university and *Grocott’s Mail*, the oldest surviving independent newspaper in South Africa. They spent their semester break reporting in Grahamstown with help from local residents who acted as interpreters.

As they’d done on the South Side, they profiled a dozen residents, people like Elizabeth Sintim, a temporary economic refugee from Ghana. She’s running a beauty shop while trying to negotiate the rules and regulations that prevent her from attaining permanent status as an immigrant and that keep her from sending money home to her 2-year-old daughter or even opening a bank account in her new country.

The students compared what they’d encountered and what they’d expected. Christine Mehta admitted that she’d imagined “wild, exotic adventures in a foreign land as one of those edgy freelance journalists featured in movies and on the pages of *National Geographic*.” Instead, she found “real people living real lives — following routines quite similar to what I had seen on the South Side, 8,340 miles away.”

Asanda Ncwadi, the 19 year old who translated for Christine, wanted to know one thing: “Do we, as a community, share the spirit of ‘ubuntu,’ meaning ‘humanity?’ Do we care about our neighbors, and support those within our own community unconditionally?” His township’s dedication to “ubuntu,” he told Christine, had made him who he is today. His efforts to overcome obstacles reminded her of Derrick Thomas, a 22-year-old who’d grown up on the South Side and told her virtually the same thing about his drive to succeed.

On the new website the class has created, the World Journalism Project, Christine wrote that “I found, to my surprise, that two such very different places as Grahamstown’s township and

Syracuse's South Side have more in common than I could have ever suspected, and that reporting halfway across the world is much like reporting right here at home."

The stories and videos by SU students have been posted on the *Grocott's Mail* website for the South Africans to hear and see. Scholarship in Action allows us to tell each other our stories and to see each other and ourselves with new eyes. It is a joint enterprise, an exchange that re-maps and re-centers perceptions of communities where rich material that all too often goes unvalued constitutes a critical cultural narrative.

Re-Centering Perspectives on Difference

Getting outside ourselves and re-centering our own positions requires us to understand that we make ourselves as individuals through our relations with others. For many generations, social psychologists, and I am among them, have used the wonderful metaphor of a "looking-glass self" to capture the social interdependence that defines our lives.⁷ And that looking glass experience is a critical part of the educational excellence associated with diversity. For all too often we miss the opportunity to see nuances about ourselves because we see our reflection only in those who look exactly like us, and are positioned similarly in the world. By contrast, the revelations for our students and faculty involved in *The Stand* were as much about themselves as about the far more variegated vision they obtained of those who inhabit the world---whether they are in the South Side of Syracuse or Grahamstown, South Africa.

In particular, it is very difficult, almost impossible, without the aid of such diverse reflections to see how the groups we belong to—often by inheritance not by choice—do define us. How those groups differentially shape others' perceptions of us and the life opportunities that are at our doorstep---in ways that can create barriers to trust. When we look at ourselves through the reflections of fairly similar others, and look at dissimilar others only from afar, through lens skewed by media images and other second-hand renditions, we can't help but fail to miss the details, and come away mistaken. Like the early explorers, we will be using distorted maps, not only of the world but of ourselves.

On the other hand, the people who live in communities that are punished or ignored can see pretty clearly those who are more firmly in power---with an *epistemic privilege*, as the progressive literary scholar Satya Mohanty has described it, which often goes unrecognized. A significant part of the re-mapping involves getting far enough outside of our habitual perceptions and familiar reflections to see what others really have to tell us and to validate their insights.⁸

But paying close attention to difference is hard to do, especially as we quickly assimilate the experiences of others to our own presuppositions. Since each of us, no matter our privileges, experiences some kinds of vulnerability and challenge, it's often hard to recognize or give sufficient weight to the structural inequalities that draw a map of difference more unfairly for some than for others. That is why it is critical that we find ways on our campuses, and in our

⁷ Charles H. Cooley, *Human Nature and the Social Order* (New York: Scribner, 1902).

⁸ Satya Mohanty, *Universalism and Multicultural Politics*, panel presentation, Future of Minority Studies Symposium, Syracuse University, April, 2006. See also, Satya Mohanty, *Literary Theory and the Claims of History: Postmodernism, Objectivity, and Multicultural Politics*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

engagements in community, to penetrate the walls between groups and engage in dialogues across difference.

This experience of de-centering to see afresh the relative positioning of different groups in our society is at the heart of the inter-group dialogue curriculum pioneered at the University of Michigan, and now tailored creatively to fit the context of many other institutions. This is framed as “a face-to-face facilitated learning experience that brings together students from different social identity groups over a sustained period of time to understand their commonalities and differences, examine the nature and impact of social inequalities, and explore ways of working together toward greater equality and justice.”⁹



For three years, SU was one of nine campuses involved in the Multiversity Intergroup Dialogue Research Project that designed and implemented a common curriculum for 1400 students across the participating institutions and researched and reported on its benefits. One course focused on race and ethnicity and one on gender. They were organized around multi-disciplinary readings, experiential learning activities, small group projects, weekly writing, and reflections in which participants sum up what they have learned about issues that are facing groups on campus, in higher education, and in the broader society.¹⁰

Through the leadership of Gretchen Lopez, a faculty member in Cultural Foundations in our School of Education, SU’s program has now expanded to include undergraduate sections on sexual orientation and women, race, and gender. We have also created programs for graduate students, tenure-track and senior faculty, and high school students in the city and the suburbs.

After a semester of engagement in a structured dialogue across difference, students and faculty and staff facilitators alike report a much widened perspective on how others are situated, more proclivity to role take by imagining the perspective of others and the collection of barriers

⁹ Ximena Zúñiga, B. A. Nagda, M. Chesler, and A. Cytron-Walker, eds., *Intergroup Dialog in Higher Education: Meaningful Learning about Social Justice*, ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 32 (4) (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007) p. 2, cited by Gretchen E. Lopez and Ximena Zúñiga, “Intergroup Dialog and Democratic Practice in Higher Education,” *Educating for Deliberative Democracy*, ed. Nancy L. Thomas, New Directions for Higher Education Series 152 (Winter 2010) (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass) p. 35.

¹⁰ Participants also included Arizona State University, Occidental College, University of California-Sa n Diego, University of Maryland-College Park, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, University of Texas-Austin, and University of Washington. The project was underwritten by the Ford Foundation and the W.T. Grant Foundation. Lopez and Zúñiga, 2010, p. 38.

and opportunities that adhere differentially to various identity groups. Perhaps most critically for this conversation, the inter-group dialogue experience vastly enhances insight into one's own default map of diverse groups beyond our familiar terrain.

Building Streets that Run Two Ways

There is a special symmetry (and synergy) between the kinds of perception-stretching, map-altering experiences that happen on campus in inter-group dialogues and off campus in deep, open engagements with community. This kind of scholarship in action makes us see that the roads to campus run two ways and must be shared, in the near and long term, with others who bring with them a wide range of perspectives and expertise. Some of these roads are physical, and some are virtual “third spaces” where we can collaborate to create reciprocal partnerships that can be sustained.



In Syracuse, we recognized that our geography – our location up on the hill with the vibrant multi-cultural world of the City largely down below – constituted a very real barrier to effecting that two-way street, even as we chose to stretch beyond our map. So we proposed the Connective Corridor, an urban pathway that links the university with downtown along a route of cultural venues, parks, public memory projects, and technology. It's an ongoing public works project that has engaged the university, businesses, state, federal and local government, and non-profit and community organizations. Literally and figuratively, it has begun to be a two-way street, with students, faculty, citizens, and community organizations studying and retrieving its history and partnering in its design.



As an intersection for scholarship and the arts, it has given rise---to name just a few things--- to an urban video project projected on the sides of buildings on the Corridor, a new centrally-located space for the Community Folk Art Center (an institution in Syracuse for more than 35 years), and Ping Chong's recent production at Syracuse Stage of a play written and acted by Syracuse refugees from the Congo who will also perform it in Washington, D.C. and hope to take it to Kinshasa next year.



At the far western end of the Corridor, on the edge of downtown, SU bought an old furniture warehouse---140,000 square feet without windows---and one of our alums, the architect Richard Gluckman transformed it into a beautiful home for our School of Architecture and more recently for all of our design programs in the College of visual and Performing Arts. All of a sudden, hundreds of SU students found themselves downtown every day, travelling up and down the Corridor at all hours, many of them for the first time. The neighborhood around the Warehouse has spawned new office buildings, restaurants, and shops.

The Warehouse now also houses UPSTATE, a center for design for older industrial cities such as ours; COLAB, an interactive community laboratory for arts, technology, engagement, and communication; and the offices of the Near Westside Initiative, a partnership we did not have in mind when we moved in.

Our original map of the Corridor ended at the Warehouse. Just outside its doors sat rusty railroad trestles and one of the busiest intersections in the city: an arterial road that in places is nine lanes wide and crosses a major interstate highway exit for thousands of commuters. Beyond, there was a row of vacant and dilapidated warehouses that so completely obscured the view of the Near Westside neighborhood that residents called it "The Berlin Wall."

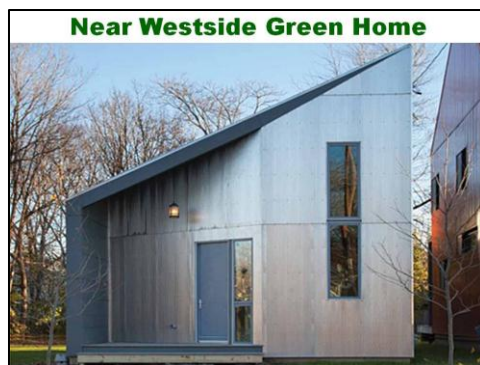


Adding to the Map: The Near Westside Initiative

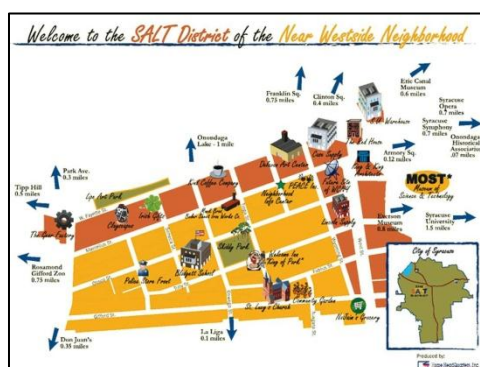
Taken together, the railroad trestles, the crowded and dangerous roadways, and the Berlin Wall formed an ugly and deeply symbolic barrier that cut the Near Westside off from the heart of downtown, even though it was only minutes away. This was once a thriving district of factories, rail yards, and housing, but as manufacturing moved out over the years, it was hit very hard. The Near Westside now includes the second poorest cluster of census tracts in the nation, with half its 3,300 residents living below the poverty line. Forty percent are unemployed, and 37 percent consider themselves to have one or more disabilities. At the same time, it’s a multi-ethnic and multi-racial community with a proud multi-cultural heritage and enormous human potential. So, in partnership with many others, we decided to change our maps to include it.



We joined with foundations, businesses, not-for-profits, state and city governments, and, most importantly, the residents themselves in creating a nonprofit organization, the Near Westside Initiative. It’s an across-the-board collaboration to pool our resources---our scholarship, our energy, our money, our imaginations----as catalysts for change, of the kind our design students imagined when they positioned a child of the community drawing her own future on the side of one of the old warehouses on the Berlin Wall. Together, we are producing results that have truly transformative potential.



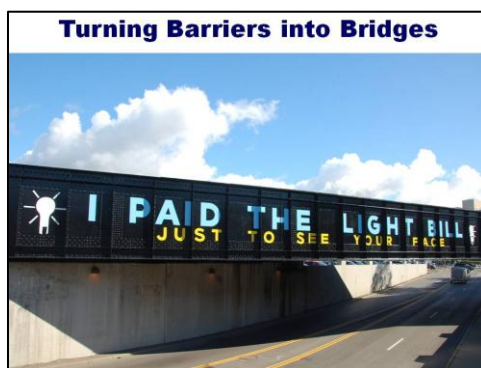
Physically, the neighborhood is changing, as beautiful, affordable, energy-efficient single-family homes are going up or being fixed up. Three non-profit housing organizations have been working in collaboration with residents, with students and faculty from our School of Architecture and the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, UPSTATE, and the Syracuse Center of Excellence, which collaborates with 200 companies and institutions on environmental issues, scholarship, and innovation. One of the new homes is so energy efficient it can be heated with the energy it takes to run a single hair dryer! Families from the neighborhood are turning vacant lots and dilapidated homes into energy-efficient, richly livable spaces. There are cranes in the neighborhood for the first time in decades and new families from the suburbs have also been moving in. The goal is revitalization, not gentrification.



As part of this effort, the Initiative is working to reposition the economy. Two warehouses on the old Berlin Wall are being redeveloped as live/work spaces to attract artists and arts-based businesses and nonprofits. One of them, the old Lincoln Supply Building, has already rented nine of the 10 new studio apartments on the top floor. This month, La Casita, a Latino Cultural Center created by SU faculty members in partnership with La Liga, the Spanish Action League, will open for the many Latino residents in this community and the Syracuse area. Next door is a small building rehabilitated by the Initiative as a home and studio for the well-known Puerto Rican artist Juan Cruz, who teaches art to children of the Near Westside.

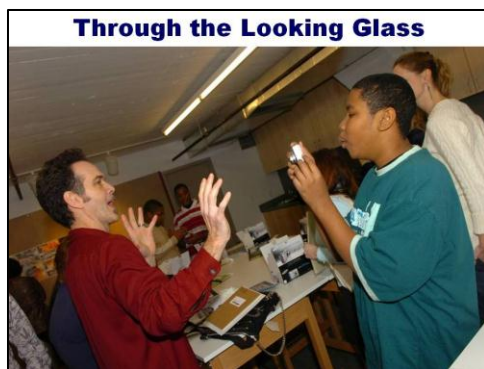


The other large warehouse, the old Case Supply Building, will house ProLiteracy, the world's largest adult literacy organization, and WCNY, our regional public television affiliate. As part of the economic revitalization of the neighborhood, the oldest architectural firm in New York State, a bookstore, a recording studio, a coffee shop, a fitness center, and a bakery have also been attracted there. To foster wealth that is rooted in the community, the Initiative is launching two resident-owned cooperatives. One is a high-tech hydroponic greenhouse that will grow and sell fresh vegetables, and the other is a "Green Property Management Company," to maintain the nearly 300,000 square feet of mixed-use properties owned and operated by the Initiative.

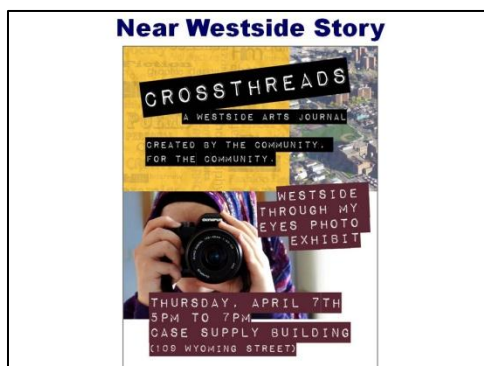


In a physical and a literal sense, we are trying to turn walls into bridges, to use an image from Angela Davis.¹¹ Last August, we welcomed our 3,450 first year students with an evening at the Warehouse. They arrived in time to see the artist Steve Powers painting those rusty railroad bridges nearby, a public art project to "visually disrupt" them as barriers. Powers called his work "A Love Letter to Syracuse." He got the words from residents he met going door to door, talking about everyday things: the weather, paying their bills, and having nothing to do. When Powers changed their words into art, he transformed the bridges, too, from barriers into points of connection and conversation between parts of the city that had rarely seen---and had little to say to---each other. Thousands of drivers see them every day.

¹¹ Angela Davis, "Walls turned sideways are bridges," *An Autobiography*, New York: International Publishers [reprint], 1988, 346.



As part of this larger effort to reposition the ways we see each other and the stories we hear and tell, photographer Stephen Mahan has been teaching SU students and high school students together in his pioneering courses on Photography and Literacy. As he says, “We’re going in and using photography as a story-telling device.” Through photography, he says, “You can tell a story without being able to read on a certain level or write on a certain level. English doesn’t have to be your first language. You might have Asperger’s, autism, a learning disability, whatever you want to call it. Instantly, right off the bat, the camera seems to level that playing field.”



For Syracuse University students, participation in courses such as Mahan’s creates eye-opening opportunities to be both expert and novice, teacher and learner, all in one experience, as they and their school district “peers” each find their vision and voice.

The Looking-Glass University

As we re-position the mirror for the looking-glass self, we also transform the looking-glass university. The deep, cross-disciplinary, multi-generational collaborations in community fostered by a vision of Scholarship in Action serve as a reflection back on the ways in which we all interact on campus. This occurs along many dimensions, but most particularly in how it creates a richer map for full participation for faculty and staff as well as our students. More voices, more disciplines, more perspectives are seen as valuable. The passionate commitment to community of many of our faculty and staff and students of color is validated. The hands-on expertise of our professors of practice who, like Mahan, often straddle their professional and academic silos, can be better rewarded. And the preferences of many of our junior faculty,

attracted to Syracuse to continue the interdisciplinary and engaged work begun in graduate school, can be more easily accommodated in their career trajectory.

These transformations are supported by activity nationally as well. *Imagining America*, for example, sponsored a Tenure Team Initiative, culminating in a very influential report, entitled *Scholarship in Public: Knowledge Creation and Tenure Policy in the Engaged University*, by Julie Ellison of Michigan and Timothy Eatman of Syracuse. This report spurred fervent dialogue on evaluating excellence in public scholarship and newly revised tenure and promotion documents at SU. We have changed our faculty handbook to better accommodate public scholarship and to encourage and reward scholarship that does and will have an impact in communities both near and far. As we've seen in some of the examples I've described today, it produces "works" that appear in non-traditional forms and outlets. Its "impact" must be measured on different audiences and by an expanded set of peers, and it crosses the sacred divisions of the three-legged academic stool of teaching, research, and service.

We also now do a better job of recognizing and rewarding the work of our professors of practice, such as that of Marion Wilson, a sculptor who is director of community initiatives in our School of Education. She has been using the Near Westside as a studio for what she calls "social sculpture," named after the concept put forward by Josef Beuys, that sculpture is not only object making - but can also be thought, experience and how we mold and shape the world.

With a cross-disciplinary team of faculty and students from the arts, humanities, education, ecology, and business, Professor Wilson has led a two-year project to transform a former drug house, across the street from an elementary school, from a menace to a promise. The house at 601 Tully Street, which had to be stripped down to the studs, has been re-imagined and is being rebuilt with recycled materials.



Wilson's graduate and undergraduate students have collaborated with students and teachers from Fowler High School, also on the Near Westside, as clients, design partners, building collaborators, and eventual co-managers of a small business to be housed there. The high school students have served as "experts" on the community's likes and dislikes, often providing a reality check. Early on, when the SU students were discussing the feasibility of a wall covered with vines for insulation, one of the high school students protested that the neighborhood already had houses overgrown with weeds. Why did they want another one?

As Professor Wilson told the zoning officials who approved the plans, the process that has created 601 Tully, which will open this summer, will “make it less of an object than a living thing that changes the way we live.”

And changing the way we live off campus, really does, I believe reverberate to change the ways we interact on campus, creating a more inclusive academic culture and community of practice. A culture that demonstrates by practice how knowledge-making is influenced by the inclusiveness of the experiences and identities and expertise shared in the discovery process.

To promote this kind of culture-building on campus, we sponsored 19 Chancellor’s Leadership Projects – interdisciplinary and engaged cross-campus teams supported by grants from my office. Several examples of these projects make this point directly -- *Transnationalizing LGBT Studies* and *Democratizing Knowledge* are challenging public understandings of difference, identity, and equality in global and local contexts, while two others, CentralNYSpeaks and the Cold Case Justice Initiative, investigate a citizen’s agenda for our local community and an agenda to re-open unsolved civil rights murders nationally. At the same time, many others in the group promote changes in modes of scholarly collaboration even when the ostensible content focus might not seem as directly applicable to inclusion and democratic culture. For example, the *Syracuse Sustainable Science Action Center* uses new media techniques to create a “living community” of discourse on sustainability with a broad reach beyond the academy; while *Smart Kids-Visual Stories* engages middle school students in making digital videos to more directly and openly capture their experiences of urban education.

This climate that we create by being an institution that cares about its *institutional citizenship* in the world has positive ripple effects on the life and work of scholars and students in disciplines well beyond those traditionally engaged in action research or public scholarship. I see this every day at Syracuse, as, for example, the scientists and engineers in the Syracuse Biomaterial Institute see their work on biomedical innovations as connected in the broadest sense to making a difference in the world, as do the environmental engineers creating sensors to detect water pollution or acid rain. Even more promising, when scholarship and teaching is put in a broad context of engagement, our scholars and teachers are drawn more toward inclusive partnerships that may cross sectors, such as university and industry, providing for new sources of support and new role models for faculty. This was exactly what we successfully proposed to the National Science Foundation in obtaining an ADVANCE grant for institutional transformation for women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics – “The Syracuse Inclusive Connective Corridor.” And as we make these more inclusive connections, we re-draw the map of diversity on campus, changing both the faces at the table and the position of the table itself vis a vis the world.

Scholarship in Action

Scholarship in action reorients our scholarship and teaching. As a vision built on diversity, it subverts structural inequalities by allowing us to see ourselves and others with clearer eyes. It spans difference, enabling us to perceive the value in neglected community narratives and opportunity in decaying landscapes that can evolve in surprising new ways, both human and physical. It makes us see that the roads to campus run two ways and must be shared,

in the near and long term, with others who bring with them a wide range of credentials, some of them known and some of them unexpected. It creates agile, reciprocal partnerships that build that rare commodity, social trust, as it relocates and transforms our institutions and our communities. On an ongoing basis, it compels us to rethink and reinforce our commitments to higher education as a public, as well as a private, good.