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Imagining America

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From the Director
Tenure: A Public Matter
Julie Ellison

For a long time, I refused to write about tenure in this column because I thought that it would bore—and alienate readers who are not faculty members themselves. Tenure, I thought, would seem like an academic guild ritual irrelevant to the wider community of public scholars and culture workers. But I am going to write about it now, using the word, tenure, as a synonym for the broader terms, "tenure and promotion" or "the reward system" for university faculty.

As part of a broad national discussion about public scholarship—what it is, what difference it makes, and how it flourishes—I have decided that tenure is a public matter. The tenure issue is bound up with Imagining America’s key task: furthering public scholarship that is rooted in the link between culture and citizenship. This task involves defining what public scholarship is and establishing the specific character of its excellence.

I believe that there are four reasons why Imagining America should devote some of its resources to addressing tenure as a public matter:

• Existing tenure policies in the humanities and arts can impede the flow of knowledge between campuses and communities. The flow of ideas will become richer and smarter once these discouragements are removed.

• Campus-community projects aren’t as good as they could be. Their processes and products need to be reflected on and debated. We should be asking, what are the measures of excellence for cultural work by individuals, groups, programs? This kind of critical reflection is itself a form of public scholarship.

• Public scholarship can strengthen alliances between universities and other knowledge-making institutions. Much of what universities do is directly tied to the work of other public cultural institutions, including schools, museums, libraries, theaters, and public radio and television. Policies that encourage public scholarship can make these alliances more deliberate and useful.

• Many faculty experience a frustrating clash between their intellectual goals, which include pursuing community-based scholarship, and institutional tenure policies. Figuring out how public scholarship counts is an important step in building a diverse faculty in colleges and universities.

At Imagining America’s national conference in Fall 2003, Kristina Valaitis, Executive Director of the Illinois Humanities Council, lauded faculty scholars involved in public humanities projects and called on universities to “Reward these faculty! Give them tenure!” In the worst-case scenario, Valaitis said, such faculty are “penalized within the university for their efforts.” She urged, “Work that bridges the academy and the community should count toward tenure and promotion.”

The current system extracts a high price both from communities, because they aren’t getting access to publicly-engaged faculty, and from scholars who feel that they can’t practice the kind of scholarship they want to pursue. If we can adapt the tenure process to include public scholarship in the cultural dimension, then it’s possible to benefit both groups. We need changes that are flexible and credible.

In response to urgings from our whole national network, Imagining America is forming a tenure team. This will be a group of faculty scholars and artists, presidents and provosts, and experienced professionals in community-based organizations and public cultural institutions. The team—to be announced in September 2004—will produce a report grounded in a broad, coherent vision of public scholarship in the humanities, arts, and design. We hope that the report will be a useful tool for faculty, chairs, and deans in the cultural disciplines.

The Center for the Study of Public Scholarship at Emory University describes public scholarship as “collaborative scholarship that connects knowledge produced inside and outside of academic institutions.” In this spirit, Imagining America’s tenure team will focus squarely on creativity, discovery, and research—the making of new knowledge, new understanding, and new cultural forms.
From the Director (continued from page 1)

Tenure policies in higher education are continuously adapting to change. They have adapted continuously to new realities, such as growing numbers of practicing artists with faculty appointments, research in fields like women’s studies where new feminist methodologies challenged academic norms, and the trend towards more edgy and personal kinds of academic writing, such as the memoir. Public scholarship is another challenge that is being met differently at different kinds of institutions. Because Imagining America serves such a diverse array of colleges and universities, each with different priorities, we are not going to advocate for a single approach to tenure.

Imagining America is not going to reinvent the wheel. Rather, the team will adapt or translate good policies that already exist so that they better fit the cultural disciplines. Thus the portfolio model used in architecture and urban planning programs could be shaped to accommodate some forms of public scholarship in the humanities. The team will propose new approaches only where there is no good current model. For example, there is no policy that values integration and complexity as specific kinds of excellence. The tenure team therefore might propose a way to evaluate the integration, within a single complex project, of all three of the university’s missions—teaching, research, and public engagement.

Many efforts to rethink the grounds of tenure and promotion are already underway in higher education. These include Boyer’s work on the “scholarship of engagement” and its important sequels, nurtured by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching; Preparing Future Faculty, initiated by the Council of Graduate Schools and the American Association of Colleges and Universities; the “Faculty Roles and Rewards” program of the American Association for Higher Education; and the East/West Clearinghouses for the Scholarship of Engagement.

If we take public scholarship seriously, then we need to frame broader and more flexible definitions of scholarship, research, and creative work. We need to think adventurously about what we are willing to define as knowledge, who we consider to be engaged in research, what we regard as interesting, and how learning, research, teaching, debate, and action are coming together in complex projects that, crucially, require new measures of excellent complexity.

SLAP Branches Out

What happens when an initiative takes off beyond the wildest dreams of its creator? That’s what S.K. Woodall, artist and adjunct professor at Carnegie Mellon University, is about to find out. His Sustainable Landscape and Architecture Project, otherwise known as SLAP, has grown roots that reach from its original seeds in Pittsburgh to Atlanta, Georgia, and Birmingham, Alabama, growing from a local partnership into a cross-regional initiative, and one that could soon take on national proportions.

SLAP, an Imagining America “best practice,” is a community-based, after-school arts education initiative, founded in 1995. Since then, over 300 students, primarily African-American and economically disadvantaged youth from inner-city Pittsburgh, have completed the program. To create a base of theoretical knowledge, SLAP leads off with mini-courses and studio experiences with CMU faculty and professional guests from the community. Then the students go on neighborhood tours and field trips to places ranging from construction sites to Frank Lloyd Wright’s Fallingwater. With their new knowledge and experiences, the students head to Pittsburgh’s Hill District, a once-depressed area whose vacant lots and brownfields nonetheless offer a promising canvas for renewal. In teams and individually, the students conceive of restoration ideas and draft preliminary designs and proposals. Then come presentations and external critiques, with the program culminating in the execution of an integrated site restoration plan.

These projects teach students practical job skills and nurture budding interests in areas that play very minor roles in the public schools: creative design applications, technical drawing, design applications of virtual reality, model-making, robotics, site analysis methods, and landscape design and horticulture.
Haverford College: On the Path To Partnership

In contrast to the long-established partnerships of some Pennsylvania institutions, Haverford College’s Hurford Humanities Center has just begun to collaborate with its local community. When contacted about this article, Kim Benston, the Director of the newly-formed Humanities Center, noted that Haverford had joined Imagining America not because it had this sort of programming, but rather because it thought it would do so in the future. Until now, he says, ”The Center’s relationship to the community at large has been a case of disseminating information about what we do and welcoming non-campus audiences to Center events.”

But Haverford has an unusual advantage in its historical background. An institution with strong Quaker roots, the College has a century and a half-old tradition of service learning, which has become particularly strong in the last two decades. Seventy to eighty percent of Haverford students are engaged in service learning, and most of that not for any academic credit at all. The challenge, says Benston, is not to motivate students to help out, but rather to build on existing collaborative and creative partnerships in order to enhance dialogue about the fate of a shared culture. He sees creating these more innovative relationships as particularly challenging to the arts and humanities, because traditional service is often easier to conceptualize and put into action.

But SLAP does more than fill in curriculum gaps. It familiarizes them with college life, gives them challenging and rewarding work, and teaches them to find mentors and friends in fellow students and faculty. As a result, participants begin imagining and planning for a college education. Sixty percent of SLAP alumni from the 1999 and 2000 sessions are now enrolled at schools including CMU, Cornell, University of Pittsburgh, University of Washington, and the Rhode Island School of Design—a record far exceeding that of the Pittsburgh Public School. Understandably, many SLAP alumni are inspired to study architecture and design.

SLAP also benefits design arts academy and professions, where women and people of color are highly under-represented. By piquing an interest in the design arts among African-American high-school students of both sexes, SLAP plays a pivotal role in promoting diversity in Carnegie Mellon’s architecture program, as well as in the other art and architecture programs nationwide in which past participants are now enrolled. Now college students, these SLAP alums become the designers and architects of tomorrow.

Until recently, Professor Woodall’s volunteer services, volunteer instructors and guest teachers, and discretionary resources at Carnegie Mellon were enough to keep this innovative and successful program running. But now SLAP is "a victim of its own success," as Woodall says, and needs to find new partners and new resources to continue its growth and to sustain the program. In Pennsylvania, the Pittsburgh Public School has proposed a formal partnership with CMU that will result in the creation of an Architecture Academy, of which SLAP will form one part. The academy will be aligned with the school district's Career Development System, and will include middle school, secondary school, and university levels to support a continuum of experience and learning for the students.

And SLAP has grown branches in new soil. Oscar Harris, a Carnegie Mellon alumnus and trustee, and owner of Turner Associates (Architects and Planners), Inc., is working to bring SLAP down to Georgia. Several Atlanta organizations and institutions are lending a hand, including the Georgia Institute of Technology, the Atlanta District Council of the Urban Land Institute; and the Atlanta Public School system. The Atlanta Program will call itself the Atlanta Center for Creative Inquiry. Meanwhile, in Auburn, Alabama, Professor Bruce Lindsey, Head of the College of Architecture at Auburn University, has agreed to incorporate SLAP into Auburn’s Urban Studio. Representatives of the City of Tuskegee, and the Birmingham Public Schools have also pledged their support to this new Southern Initiative. If the SLAP model can cross regions successfully, it may not be long before we see it taking root across the nation as well.

Imagining Pennsylvania

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is home to four Imagining America member institutions. Those institutions, University of Pennsylvania, Haverford College, Lafayette College, and Bucknell University, represent wide ranges of histories with campus-community partnerships, from Penn's long-established relationship with its West Philadelphia neighborhood, to the innovative programs at Lafayette, and to the newly established centers at Bucknell and Haverford (see sidebar).

Penn's public scholarship is now housed at the Center for Community Partnerships (CPP), directed by Ira Harkavy. CPP takes on three kinds of activities: academically-based community service, direct traditional service, and community development. Academically-based community service courses (ABCS) form the core of the Center’s work, with 150 ABCS courses involving over 1,200 students a year. Some courses connect students with local public schools in the improvement of local urban nutrition; others promote arts and humanities projects. In one class out of the Classical Studies department, university students meet regularly with local high school students to read Plato’s Republic and discuss questions like "What constitutes the good life?" In another discipline, Dr. Carol Muller's music students study the cultural and political contexts of popular African musical styles, while they participate in an drumming and dancing workshop with professional musicians, West African dancers and middle-school students.
Direct traditional service and community service at Penn focus on the public school as a vehicle for concrete community change and innovation. The Center recently established a program in Arts Education and Community (AEC). AEC projects, centered on the West Philadelphia area, include artist residencies in public schools, inclusive community art events, and professional development workshops for public school teachers and administrators in arts-integrated education. For example, poet Samantha Borrow became part of a Saturday Enrichment Academy at a local elementary school, and together the students and teachers wrote original poetry, published in a chapbook. AEC programs also complement other Center projects, such as the Urban Nutrition Initiative. Lynette Johnson's 9th grade class worked with community artist Laureen Griffin to make a video called "Fruitstand." As they made the film, the students investigated their own food choices and learned nutritional basics, as they also learned how to use a video camera, set up shots, and conduct interviews.

At Bucknell University in Lewisburg, in central Pennsylvania, Janice Butler heads the new Office of Service Learning, founded in the Fall of 2002. While Bucknell has long had service learning classes, this office was founded to help centralize their activities and to serve as a resource for interested faculty. She sees her role as that of a "matchmaker," in which she matches students and faculty to community groups. For example, for a course in Multicultural Education that has run for three years, students choose a site at which to work. The sites, at which students were obligated to work for at least twelve hours a semester, included ESL tutoring in the schools, the AIDS Resource Alliance, an organization for migrant workers, and Lewisburg Prison Project. She also works hard to attract more faculty to community engagement, running three-day faculty development workshops and themed round-tables, at which faculty members and community leaders mingle. The Office also holds Community Partners Dinners, where representatives from 70 different local organizations meet with faculty and students, to discuss their needs and interests, and to see where they might share common ground.

At Lafayette College, in Easton, Char Gray, the director of the Landis Community Outreach Center there, sees the relationship of the college to its community as part of intellectual development. Gray also teaches in the Values and Science/Technology (VAST) program, whose "graduates" often become volunteers for the Landis programs. Gray says she sees student engagement with the community on a continuum, beginning with their initial ventures and volunteerism, moving through an exploration of and reflection on their participa-

tion, and then analyzing the situation, be it hunger or public health, from increased critical thought and a greater ability to change the situation itself, not merely to help with it.

The Landis Community Outreach Center's programs are divided into four teams, staffed and led by a total of twenty students. Each team has a particular focus: C.H.I.L.L.D. (Creating Hope in Life Development), Community Renewal, Public Health and Education, Kids in the Community (K.I.C., an after-school program at Easton Housing Authority sites). Within the team, individual programs work on particular issues. For example, the Public Health and Education team members help staff HIV/AIDS programs, a day-care service for adults with dementia, hospital volunteer groups, and Meals On Wheels. And as a team, the students work to look beyond their individual issue and community partner, and collaborate to see how they can effect change at a higher level. This participatory method is part and parcel of the Center's philosophy. Above all, Gray stresses, the Center's goal is to be in and a part of the Easton and Lehigh Valley community. She says, "'Partnership' language intentionally pervades our conversations with students, faculty, and community partners so as to keep us focused on the nature and scope of what we do."

For more information on Penn's Center for Community Partnership, visit www.penn.edu/ccp. For Bucknell's Office of Service Learning, go to www.bucknell.edu/service learning.
And for the Landis Community Outreach Center at Lafayette College, visit www.Lafayette.edu/~outreach.

**Imagining Michigan Update**

Thanks to the Governor’s Cool Cities Initiative, culture workers in Michigan were already rethinking the value of arts and culture to their communities when they gathered for the fourth annual Imagining Michigan conference. This year’s theme was "Strategic Alliances: Putting Culture to Work for Michigan," and people from across the peninsula came eager to make new connections, think about new practices, and learn about what others in the state were doing. The program is available on the IA website (http://www.ia.umich.edu/iys/index.html). Jim Brooks, head of the West Michigan Strategic Alliance, gave a riveting keynote address. The West Michigan Strategic Alliance is an innovative organization balancing regional development, environmental integrity, and social justice, and can be visited at http://www.wm-alliance.org.
The other highlight of the conference was the presentation of the first annual Imagining Michigan Award, given to the best campus-community partnership in the arts, humanities, or design. The winning project was "Homelands," a collaboration between the Matrix Theatre of Detroit and the Arts of Citizenship Program at the University of Michigan. For the last four years, Detroit-based community theater artists, UM faculty and students, and residents of southwest Detroit collaborated on the Homelands Project. Students researched the history of the neighborhood and conducted writing workshops in senior centers and community centers in the area to generate stories. Playwright Wes Nethercott then worked with the students to create a play. "Homelands," set in southwest Detroit’s Michigan Central Railroad Depot, and to assemble a lobby exhibit of historic photographs of the area. The award was presented by Dr. William M. Anderson, Director of the Michigan Department of History, Arts and Libraries. Two other programs, the Petoskey Area C.S. Lewis Festival and the Great Lakes Folk Festival, earned special recognition from the award committee as well.

We bow to you!

Please join us in thanking the incandescent Kristin Hass for her leadership as Associate Director of Imagining American. We congratulate her as she takes up her new appointment as Assistant Professor of American Culture at the University of Michigan, despite the pangs we feel at her departure from the IA staff. Kristin crafted the relationship with individual campuses that shaped IA as a consortium. She has been our conference architect. And most importantly, she has been our intellectual pathfinder, helping us to understand IA as a broad alliance of knowledge-making institutions, including her particular specialty: museums, historic sites, and sites of public memory. Kristin will continue to work with IA as a consultant.

Arts In Action:
A Network for Student Leaders

Imagining America’s National Conference was also host to the first annual gathering of Arts In Action, a group of undergraduate students who promote social justice and civic involvement through the arts and humanities. Arts in Action is a joint project of Imagining America and Campus Compact’s Raise Your Voice civic campaign, to bring these engaged students together and to encourage them in their efforts. Students gathered in Champaign-Urbana and shared strategies, gave new practices a trial run, and developed new methods for bringing arts-oriented activism into their communities. Together, they created a network for creating active dialogue between them and our other constituencies.

How best to continue and promote this work? First, we want to work with the state Campus Compacts as well as our own institutional reps to locate engaged students in the arts and humanities. Please pass the word to interested students. Second, we want to create information resources for Arts in Action participants. Over the summer, Program Coordinator Negin Salmasi, a University of Michigan undergraduate, will work with the Raise Your Voice campaign to generate a web-based menu of cultural engagement opportunities, such as Create America, Debate Watch, Interdependence Day, the New York Times America Democracy Project (a project of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities), Public Square in Chicago, Democracy Matters, and Imagining America’s own activities. Third, we will continue to provide time and space at IA’s national conferences for the Arts in Action annual meetings. Finally, we hope to publish—online or in print—students’ stories about their experiences. They have plenty to say about the interweaving and co-dependence of culture, citizenship and politics.

To get involved with Arts in Action, contact Negin Salmasi at salmasi@umich.edu.

Coming Soon!

Coming in the Fall/Winter newsletter: the American Council of Learned Societies survey on public scholarship, the Kellogg Foundation-funded research project on the question “what constitutes an excellent campus-community partnership in the arts, humanities and design,” an explanation of the new Infrastructure for Public Scholarship web tool, and the Tenure Team.
Liberal Arts, Performing Arts

An innovative way to link academics, performance, and public engagement has sprung up around poet and teacher Sekou Sundiata’s work-in-progress, The America Project. The America Project is a cycle of songs, poems, and monologues supported by still and moving images, which, in the spirit of critical patriotism, does nothing less than to examine the soul of America. It raises provocative questions such as “what does the "pursuit of happiness" mean in a society that places so much emphasis on tangible outcomes for most endeavors?” and “what does the public imagination steeped in violence say about who we are?”

But this work is more than a complex multimedia performance raising difficult questions. Its very creation is being shaped by an important residency by Sundiata at Lafayette College, in Easton, Pennsylvania. Lafayette College has structured their New Student Orientation for the incoming class of 2008 around the ideas invoked by Sundiata’s work. This year’s orientation theme is “Human Security, Civil Society, and Liberal Learning: Exploring American Identity.” Sundiata’s residency and his work-in-progress will help integrate academics, performing arts, and community around these subjects. Summer readings such as David Shipler’s The Working Poor: Invisible In America will connect classroom discussions to the ideas that Sundiata raises in his work, while coordinated engagement activities, including a voter drive, assistance with interviews, and poetry circles, will be run through the Landis Community Outreach Center.

Lafayette’s initiative will serve as a pilot for consortium members also seeking to make the integration of academics, performing arts, and community partnerships a central concern of liberal arts education and civic culture. Dean Gladstone “Fluney” Hutchinson will organize a panel on this residency at the 2004 Imagining America national conference in Philadelphia. He has also volunteered to lead a “Liberal Arts, Performing Arts” working group to enable people at participating universities to exchange ideas about residencies. As Sundiata’s residencies take shape over the next year, this group will serve to connect people eager to make the incorporation of academics, performance, and community partnerships a permanent way of life.

For more information on Sundiata and his residencies, contact Ann Rosenthal, Executive Director, MultiArts Projects and Production (ann@multiartsprojects.com). To learn more about what’s happening at Lafayette College or about the “Liberal Arts, Performing Arts” working group, email Fluney Hutchinson at hutchins@lafayette.edu.

2003 National Conference Report

Imagining America held its fourth national conference on November 9–10, 2003 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The conference was hosted by hosted—and generously co-sponsored—by then UIUC Chancellor Nancy Cantor, who also delivered the keynote address.

The theme of the conference was “Affirming Action: The New Politics of Cultural Knowledge.” We invited participants to address the following questions: Why is it so important now -- 50 years after the Brown v. Board of Education decision and in the days before the Grutter v. Bollinger decision – to think about the civic roles of colleges and universities? Why should colleges and universities be active agents in their local, national and international communities? And, perhaps most importantly, how?

Conference sessions were set up as "strategic dialogues." Special panels focused on the work of an adventurous museum curator who helped a Connecticut town uncover the history of an individual slave, campus-community partnerships in Illinois, the cultural democracy movement, and efforts to “liberate research” through new models of public scholarship. And a spectacular evening performance by poet and musician Sekou Sundiata formed part of the University of Illinois’s year-long Brown vs. Board of Education commemoration.

The conference was preceded and followed by four concurrent meetings, with participants then participating in the conference.

• The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation Public Scholarship Grant Recipients gathered to share their knowledge.

• The joint Campus Compact/Imagining America project, Arts in Action, brought together engaged undergraduates from across the country.

• The Task Force on Civic Engagement of the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC) met with a special focus on cultural programs.

• Immediately after the main conference, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign hosted an “Imagining Illinois” Round Table Discussion with the Illinois Arts Alliance, the Illinois Council for the Arts, the Illinois Humanities Council, and other partners.
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IA welcomes our newest Board Members:

Ira Harkavy is Associate Vice President and founding Director of the Center for Community Partnerships, University of Pennsylvania. As Director of the Center for Community Partnerships, he has helped to develop service learning and academically-based community service courses as well as participatory action research projects that involve faculty and students from across the university, working with the West Philadelphia community.

Frank Mitchell is Director of the Museum Communications Program at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia. He conducted historical research for the Fortune Project at the Mattatuck Museum in Waterbury, CT.

Sekou Sundiata is a Professor of Literature at Eugene Lang College of New School University, New York City. A renowned poet and musician, Sundiata has just completed a national tour of Blessing the Boats, a one-person theatrical work, and is embarking on a new series of residencies at universities and colleges.

Christopher Zinn is Executive Director of the Oregon Council for the Humanities. He holds a Ph.D. in English and American literature, and has taught Humanities and American literature and directed the American Studies program at Reed College.

Outgoing Members

With appreciation for their outstanding service and contributions to the Imagining America National Advisory Board, we thank these outgoing board members, who served from 2000-2003:

Karla F.C. Holloway
Dean of the Humanities and Social Sciences, Duke University

Gregory Jay
Director, Cultures and Communities Program, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Jamil Zainaldin
Executive Director, Georgia Humanities Council
Save the Date!

We are looking forward to our next national conference, held in Philadelphia at the University of Pennsylvania, Friday, November 5 to Sunday, November 7, 2004. The theme is "Making Knowledge: Democracy, Cultural Partnerships, and the Urban University." Come meet representatives of organizations and institutions large and small, urban and rural, and take part in fertile conversations and productive dialogues.

We welcome your participation both in the conference and in the planning. If you’d like to propose a workshop or a panel, let us know. To learn more about our hosts, the Center for Community Partners, visit their website at www.penn.edu/ccp.

For more information about the conference or to register, please visit the Imagining America website at www.ia.umich.edu.

If you have any questions, please contact Heather Dornoff at hdornoff@umich.edu

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