The Scholarship of Engagement and Sustainable Development: The Miriam College Experience

Grace H. Aguiling-Dalisay, Ph.D.
Miriam College, Philippines

gaguiling-dalisay@mc.edu.ph

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Abstract. Teaching, research and extension service have been identified as the threefold mission of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). However, scholarship has been traditionally associated with research and teaching. This view changed with Boyer's introduction of the four dimensions of scholarship whereby the scholarship of engagement was highlighted as an equally important form of scholarship which facilitates HEIs' attainment of sustainable development. The paper describes the engagement activities of the Advocacy Centers and Colleges of Miriam College. It points to the gains and challenges, emphasizing that the dominant test is to build on the service contributions of HEIs by subjecting these to the rigors of academic inquiry. Scholarship of engagement. Academic service learning. Higher Education.

Higher education is charged with knowledge production and management in the service of humanity. It is responsible for the formation and continuing education of competent, socially responsible professionals and academics who are also engaged citizens.

Teaching, research and service have been long identified as the threefold mission of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Central to this, scholarship has been identified as the defining characteristic of higher education. While similarly mentioned, however, these three functions have not been equally regarded as forms of scholarship; research and teaching being more readily rated as scholarly activities.

The landscape of scholarship changed with Ernest Boyer’s work published in 1990. Re-considering the “Priorities of the Professoriate”, he redefined scholarship along four (4) dimensions: discovery, integration, application and teaching. The scholarship of discovery involves research or investigative activities in the pursuit of new knowledge. The scholarship of integration is that which is conducted through the analysis of existing knowledge and the establishment of connections across themes and disciplines toward a more
meaningful understanding of previously disjointed information. The practice related to solving real-world problems resulting from knowledge is called the scholarship of application. Lastly, the scholarship of teaching refers to classroom instruction which inspires active student and faculty learning.

The scholarship of application requires that service activities are faithfully documented, are evaluated by beneficiaries and partners, and are related to the academic expertise of the professor. This dimension of scholarship has come to be known as the scholarship of engagement following Boyer’s definition of engagement as follows: scholarship activities that connect the university with people and places outside the campus, in the end, direct the work of the academy towards more humane ends (Boyer in Cox, 2006). This definition underscores the dynamic and mutually beneficial nature of partnerships within this scholarship dimension. It posits that the quality of the scholarship of engagement cuts across the threefold mission of research, teaching and service. Moreover, the quality of this scholarship is based on the shared standards of the academe and the community (Miller, 2006).

The scholarship of engagement presents new challenges for Higher Education. These may be better understood from the experience of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee that is documented in the book “Creating a New Kind of University: Institutionalizing Community-University Engagement (Percy, Zimpher, Brukardt, 2006). The various articles point to key challenges in engagement such as the perceived negative correlation between academic rigor and social relevance (Wergin, 2006), structural changes related to the faculty reward system (Fagan, 2006), extra-governance structures for providing faculty opportunities for engagement (Murphy, 2006), and engagement as a viable and respectable option for scholars (Kelly, 2006). As Brukardt, Percy and Zimpher (2006) state:

“Community collaboration is at the heart of engagement and yet is the most difficult part to get right...community partnerships are not the university seeking a community collaborator to complete a project but rather a reciprocal relationship where academe and community decide what is important and how it is to be accomplished” p.3

Indeed, there is an increasing awareness, if not practice, of HEI-community partnerships as intrinsic to scholarship. This may be anchored on secular as well as faith-based grounds for civic engagement and citizenship. On the latter, the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP) held its 76th Annual National Convention in September 2007 with the theme “Catholic Schools and Corporate Social Responsibility”. Addressing the 2,000 strong convention, the speakers presented their papers on community engagement as a responsibility of educational institutions following both quality standards and the social teachings of the Church.
In the larger regional context, the Association of South-East Asian Catholic Colleges and Universities (ASEACCU) focused its 15th Conference, held in August 2007, on the response of Catholic Colleges and Universities to globalization and evangelization. An important dimension of this response surfaced in relation to the community service programs along the lines of social responsibility. Despite the differences in the goals and outcomes of student social engagement, community service programs promise a potent avenue for self and societal transformation. (Pajarillo, 2007).

The diverse nature of academic service programs and community partnerships presents a wider range of opportunities for student involvement as well as a more complex array of development challenges for educational administrators. As Boyer clarified, service programs or citizenship projects are not considered scholarly unless they contribute to the body of knowledge that helps address societal problems. He pointed out that scholarly service is serious academic work.

Given the multifarious types of service-oriented programs, Barker (2004) proposed a taxonomy of five emerging practices in the scholarship of engagement. These are:

- Public scholarship addressing public problems requiring deliberation, using face to face open forums
- Participatory research addressing the inclusion of specific groups, using face to face collaboration with specific publics
- Community partnerships addressing social change and structural transformation, using collaboration with intermediary groups
- Public information networks addressing problems of networking and communication, using databases of public resources
- Civic literacy scholarship enhancing public discourse using communication with the general public

Despite the differences and overlaps, the taxonomy illustrates non-traditional strategies for serious, rigorous academic service initiatives. It emphasizes that “the aim is not to replace previous forms of scholarship but rather to broaden and deepen the possibilities for civic engagement in Higher Education”.

The scholarship of engagement provides a unique potential for Higher Education to fulfill its mandate of “an increased awareness of its vital
importance for sociocultural and economic development” as stated in the World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-First Century: Vision and Action (1998). Moreover, it stands to serve the following missions and functions stated in the Declaration:

- Mission to educate, to train and to undertake research: the mission to contribute to the sustainable development and improvement of society as a whole

- Long-term orientation based on relevance: relevance in higher education should be assessed based on long-term orientations on societal aims and needs…should reinforce its role of service to society, mainly through an interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary approach…

- Sharing knowledge and know-how across borders and continents: based on solidarity, recognition, and the value of sharing knowledge

- Partnerships and alliances: partnership and alliances amongst stakeholders is a powerful force in managing change. Partnerships based on common interest, mutual respect and credibility should be a prime matrix for renewal in higher education.

In the Philippines, the long-term Higher Education development Plan 2001-2010 of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) provides the vision for education as follows:

“ The higher education system of the Philippines is a key player in the education and integral formation of professionally competent, service oriented, principled, and productive citizens. Through its tri-fold function of teaching, research, and extension services, it becomes a prime mover of the nation’s socio-economic growth and sustainable development”.

Miriam College, an accredited institution of higher learning in the Philippines, envisions the formation of leaders in service who combine competence with caring, the integration of the work of education with the life of faith, the commitment to excellent academic programs infused with Christian values. In partnership with families and the community, it provides quality and relevant education that prepares students to become effective lifelong learners and productive citizens.

It is committed to the values of

- Truth: the power of knowledge and the liberating force of truth. We strive for the highest quality of intellectual and academic output at the same time that we recognize and value the wisdom of the heart.
• Justice: committed to a society where power and opportunity are equally shared; discrimination of any kind is rejected; strive for gender equality and a diverse and interdependent community

• Peace: the absence of violence as well as the presence of values, attitudes and behavior of life-based on non-violence and respect for the fundamental rights and freedom of every person

• Integrity of Creation: stewards of creation and that the well-being and happiness of future generations rest upon sustainable and equitable systems and on processes of production and consumption. We reject destruction of the environment and natural resources. We commit ourselves to care for the earth and to practice a lifestyle that sustains the health of the planet on which all life depends.

The Miriam College Advocacy Centers and Colleges

A. The Miriam College Advocacy Centers

The Advocacy Centers are a unique feature of Miriam College. They are leadership centers that complement our academic programs and serve as a hubs for various partnerships and linkages, national and international. These centers, as described in the Miriam College Strategic Plan Report 2000-2005 and the Annual Report 2005-2006, are:

I The Environmental Studies Institute (ESI)

The ESI brings together all environment related programs in campus. Through its NGO, Miriam Public Education and Awareness Campaign for the Environment (Miriam PEACE), the ESI assisted in the protected area management of the Biak-na Bato National Park in San Miguel, Bulacan through capacity building of stakeholders, ecotourism and environmental education.

In April 2004, MC signed a memorandum of agreement with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources for the management of 180 hectares of upland area in Barangay Laiban, Tanay, Rizal. This Southern Sierra Madre Wildlife Center will serve as the field study site for the academic and outreach programs of the school as well as showcase the expertise of MC in the field of sustainable development.

The ESI is also the overall coordinator of the Solid Waste Reduction Masterplan (SWARM Plan) for Metro Manila conducting Education Campaigns in various schools. Environmental Education, the flagship program of ESI continues
to give seminars and workshops for various sectors. A partnership with the CEAP led ESI to produce teacher’s modules and conduct trainer’s training nationwide.


II The center for Peace Education (CPE)

The CPE helps advance a culture of peace through peace education. Through its partnerships with CEAP, the Department of Education, Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, provided training for key administrators in the schools and local government units. It has produced various training materials and coordinates the Philippine Peace Education Network and is an active partner of the Global Campaign for Peace Education for the Hague Appeal for Peace.

CPE runs the following training programs: conflict Management, Conflict Analysis and Transformation, Challenging Prejudice and Discrimination, Peer mediation, Creative Non-violence, Parenting for Peace, and Creating a Peaceable Workplace.

III The Women and Gender Institute (WAGI)

WAGI is MC’s center for research, training and advocacy on women’s rights, gender equality and non-sexist learning. It has functioned as secretariat to regional and international women’s networks. It has offered a summer Course on International Women’s Rights. This one week specialized training course for mid-career public servants, educators and NGO workers seeks to deepen the understanding of women’s rights.

WAGI also runs the eminent Women in Politics Forum, the summer Institute on Migration, and:

Literacy Workshop on Gender and Trade, a comprehensive workshop that helps participants gain a better understanding of the significance of gender issues in trade and economy, and explain the myths and norms surrounding women’s work and status.

Dialogue with Muslim Women, a venue to discuss women’s rights, gender equality, democratization, peace-building and development in Muslim Areas.

IV Institutional Network for Social Action (INSA)
INSA is the school’s center for volunteerism and social development, develops among members of the community the value of service to and solidarity with the poor. It also manages the school’s volunteer service groups: the Miriam Volunteer Mission for students and alumni, and the Gurong Lingkod for teachers.

INSA oversees Miriam College’s involvement in 5 urban poor partner communities in Quezon City namely, Daan Tubo, Marytown, Park 7 in Loyola Heights, Kaingin 1 in Pansol and Pook Libis in UP. Miriam College contributes to these communities through: 1) leadership formation which include adult and youth engagement in the community 2) promotion of community-based health and wellness through education, 3) livelihood skills development, 4) development of community care centers, and 5) provision of services such as education aid to selected public school children and medical-dental missions. These communities also serve as hosts to student immersion activities and as sites for community-based research activities.

Over the years, MC has been known for its social involvement and for its advocacy for social and political causes, shown through advocacy work and participation in multisectoral mobilization.

INSA runs the following seminar-workshops:

Training on Volunteer Service in partnership with the Volunteer Organizations Information, Coordination and Exchange (VOICE), a network of volunteer organizations; community development Training, Social Justice Advocacy, Service-Learning and Lingap Bulilit. Lingap Bulilit is the School’s Educational Outreach Program on Early Childhood Care and Development for Teachers and volunteers in community daycare centers and pre-schools.

V. G.U.R.O. Growth, Upgrading and Resource Office:
The Miriam College Teacher Training Center

GURO is a teacher-training center offering professional development programs to the MC faculty and to the external groups and individuals. It aims to bring the resources of MC to the service of public and private schools as well as local government and low-income partners communities as part of the institution’s response to the needs of Philippine education.

It offers the following training programs:

Customized Teacher Training Programs in different learning areas, Training the Trainers Program and Adopt-a-School Program.

B. The Colleges
The Higher Education Unit of Miriam College is composed of three Colleges: Arts and Sciences; Business, entrepreneurship and Accountancy; and Education.

In addition to the varied modalities of teaching in the Higher Education unit, the colleges undertake provide Academic Service Learning Programs in selected subjects, in coordination with INSA.

The example presented in this paper was prepared by Ms. Isabel Saplala, Instructor of Developmental Reading at the Department of Child Development and Education, College of Education. The project was conducted in the 1st semester of SY 2007-2008.

The Academic Service Learning Program in Developmental Reading was conducted in two places: Aklatan ni Mika and the Childhood Early Enrichment and Reinforcement School (CHEERS).

Aklatan ni Mika is a reading room housed inside the Center for Health Improvement and Life Development. It is a halfway house for 50-60 children with cancer and other related illnesses from distant provinces and their family members while undergoing long term treatment in Manila. Upon the request of the families, the students designed their classes with the goal of encouraging the children to show confidence in learning to read, write and speak and to demonstrate acquired basic pre-reading or beginning reading skills.

On the other hand, CHEERS is a Saturday School that serves 90-100 children from disadvantaged communities near Miriam College. After an evaluation of the previous year’s program, the MC students and teachers modified the curriculum and implemented changes in materials and activities used in teaching reading.

As an academic program, the teachers provided the students with an introduction to service learning, a commissioning rite of service, monitoring and supervision during the semester, and specific requirements for the end-of-term and the bases of grades. The student groups submitted a portfolio of their work while the teacher undertook an evaluation of the program.

**GAINS and CHALLENGES**

Miriam College has a long tradition of service that has been integrated in its various curricular offerings and organizational structure. As previously mentioned, the creation of advocacy centers has provided the Colleges with direct and indirect programs with its partner communities.
The following may be said to be facilitative factors for this social engagement:

1. The vision, mission and values of the school that emphasize service as evident in its goal of developing leaders in service.
2. Strong champions in the person of the President and the Chair of the Board of Trustees
3. a Performance Management System and Key Result Areas that accentuate social involvement and spirituality, alongside program quality
4. Open and regular coordination between the College Deans and the Heads of the Advocacy Centers
5. Accreditation of the school by the national bodies on Education and on Nonprofit Foundations which allow the school to develop and pursue innovative programs
6. A long history of school-community partnerships and a good reputation among community partners
7. A screening procedure of accrediting partners through INSA
8. Faculty development programs on academic service learning, volunteerism and social development
9. Presence of rubrics on student learning from service programs

While there is a decided contribution in the area of service delivery, linkage building, and social responsibility, it is the area of scholarship that remains the dominant challenge. Miriam College is the process of strengthening its research systems which would augur well for academic rigor in academic engagement programs. More specifically, there needs to be:

1. A clear articulation of the distinction between community service initiatives and the scholarship of engagement which requires methodological rigor
2. A review of faculty ranking systems which would recognize faculty achievements in the scholarship of engagement with equal importance as the other dimensions of scholarship
3. New modes and mechanisms of encouraging different types of research
4. Faculty development seminars to assist volunteer faculty members, service-learning mentors, and advocates to subject their practice to research inquiry
5. Independent appraisal of the student’s development journey and the community’s development
6. Indicators for assessment of effective community-academe collaboration, with particular focus on the quality of community participation and the benefits that accrue to them from working with HEIs.
7. Work with its academic networks so that the mandated government educational agency respects innovative educational initiatives, multi-disciplinary programs and varied research methodologies.
Miriam College takes pride in the range and quality of its academic offerings, student formation programs, community linkages and service commitments. The task of integrating research and service poses an exciting challenge that can be met jointly with community partners in the same way that other collaborative engagements have been accomplished in the past.

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Grace H. Aguiling-Dalisay finished her Ph.D. in Developmental and Philippine Psychology from the University of the Philippines Diliman where she was Professor of Psychology until 2005. She has been actively involved in social action and volunteering development research, training and advocacy in the Philippines and overseas. At present, she is Vice-President for Academic Affairs of Miriam College.