

# INTENTIONAL EDUCATION FOR RESPONSIBLE GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

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A central goal of the McMaster School for Advancing Humanity, and indeed the educational program at Defiance College in general, is to prepare students to be active and engaged citizens in an increasingly interdependent and interconnected world. This goal is not separate or separable from the McMaster School goal of benefiting communities around the world through investigating the root causes of human suffering and seeking to alleviate suffering. The collaboration with and respect for community partners that makes possible meaningful intervention in social problems is an essential ingredient in effective education for citizenship. While the two goals are inextricably connected, this introduction to the second edition of the McMaster School *Journal* will focus on the pedagogical work of the McMaster School and in particular on the five terms that comprise the above title. If we grant that an essential purpose of American higher education is the preparation of educated citizens, then it is useful to delineate practices that facilitate deep learning and connect instruction within the classroom to increased capacity for and commitment to civic engagement on the part of students.

## **INTENTIONALITY: STRUCTURED EXPECTATIONS**

Preparing students to assume the duties and responsibilities of citizenship cannot be an accidental byproduct of an educational experience focused entirely elsewhere, or at least the impact will be extremely hit-or-miss if it is so conceived. Certainly one hopes that a liberal education in and of itself enhances an individual's capacities and skills as a citizen, but we do not leave other essential areas of academic preparation to be learned through inference or osmosis. In the five years since the creation of the McMaster School, Defiance College has made an intentional and concerted effort to weave together and make mutually reinforcing the three areas of engagement: civic, intercultural, and academic.

The McMaster School itself is central to this effort due to its role within the institution as an academic experience available to all faculty and students. Faculty members cycle through the McMaster School as fellows, and students from all academic disciplines have served as scholars. Faculty and students alike take back to their classrooms a renewed commitment to civic responsibility after having participated in the projects. The deliberate decision to structure the McMaster School in such a way that all students have the opportunity to benefit from – and contribute to – its programming gives it a unique potential to shape institutional culture.

While all students have the opportunity to participate in McMaster School programs, they are required to participate in several experiences over the course of their college career that explicitly educate for civic responsibility. Almost three years ago, the Defiance College faculty revised the college learning outcomes (CLOs) to commit the college to a civically-focused educational experience. College Learning Outcome #7 articulates an intentional integration of community and curriculum. It posits that all students will: “Develop a framework linking the concepts of service, leadership, and research through the experience of curricular and co-curricular activities . . . .” The first level of CLO #7 is assessed in the First-Year Seminar required of entering students. All first-year students engage in an extended service experience and participate in structured reflection. The first-year civic engagement experience is relatively limited; it does, however, communicate to students what the college intends for them to do and to learn. Through the expectation that students will not only engage in both service and research, but come to understand the two as related, Defiance College lays out an intentional (and challenging) educational priority.

During the 2005-2006 academic year (the period covered by the projects reported in this volume), Defiance College inaugurated a new student cohort program, the Citizen Leader Program, under the umbrella of the McMaster School. This program was created to focus more intentionally on the development of the skills, expertise, and habits of mind necessary for leadership within the civic arena. Open to up to fifty new first-year students each year, this program offers scholarship support and combines a weekly direct service commitment with extensive programming on both leadership and civic responsibility. Later I will discuss the tangible results of this program evident even in its first year, but here I want to point to it as an example of intentionality in program development.

## EDUCATION: ACADEMIC GROUNDING AND WIDE DISSEMINATION

To be an educated citizen in the 21st Century requires a deep understanding of global issues and an awareness of interrelation. The focus of the McMaster School on complex international problems accelerates this process of global awareness for the entire campus.

One locus of attention has been the ongoing conflict in Israel and the Palestinian Territories and its terrible human costs. Two articles in this *Journal* report on work done in the Middle East, and, more important pedagogically, on the work done to increase awareness on the Defiance College campus and in local and regional communities. In fall 2005, Abuna Elias Chacour, founder of a multi-faith educational institution and passionate advocate for peace, visited campus and spoke to a church full of students, faculty, and community members. Students in the required Global Civilization course attended as part of their coursework and came away with a deep understanding of both the extent of the challenge and the difference that one committed individual can make. In their *Journal* essay, Michael Spath and Don Knueve stress that the McMaster-sponsored activities seek to promote mutual understanding and an inclusive approach to peace: "Defiance College sponsored multi-faith events to help develop an ecumenical strategy so that all can feel welcome in dealing with the complex issues of Israel and the Palestinian Territories, stressing respect for all faiths and all peoples connected with the conflicts of this region." The efforts to educate broadly on this extremely vexed and complex global problem exemplify the mission of the McMaster School to promote "understanding tempered by wise deliberation" in educating students for citizenship.

In addition to providing campus-wide events, the McMaster School, through the work of fellows and scholars, is increasingly permeating the curriculum and invigorating coursework. One example from the 2005-2006 academic year is illustrative. To support the teacher training project in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, Dr. Fred Coulter involved an advanced education class in the project of developing a written curriculum to assist under-prepared teachers. This project was intellectually challenging because the students had to craft a curriculum that could not assume any supplemental materials. In addition to being an excellent assignment conceptually, the project, unlike much student research, had the potential immediately and dramatically to make a difference in the world. Much more than a grade was riding on the final product, and the students engaged deeply in the project as a result. The curriculum was translated into Khmer and delivered in January 2006 to 120 teachers during training sessions on-site. This was

the first written curriculum in their own language most of these teachers had ever received.

While the most dramatic phase of the McMaster School international trips is obviously the on-the-ground work abroad, the academic work begins long before travel and extends well after the team returns. The work of fellows and scholars is grounded in year-long learning communities that call on both faculty and student participants to research and present on a variety of topics, ranging from specific research questions to cultural context and history. The other programs under the McMaster School – Honors, Bonner Leaders, Citizen Leaders – are increasingly using the learning community model to structure their international projects as well. Through use of weekly meetings, background readings, and periodic structured reflection, the learning community model ensures that first and foremost the international work of Defiance College faculty and students is an academic enterprise with clear learning goals. This emphasis does not to any degree detract or distract from the service to communities; indeed it enables much more effective work because students are better able to interact cross-culturally when they have an understanding of culture and history.

The McMaster learning communities balance broad interdisciplinary discussion of cultural and historical context with the opportunity for students to conduct serious research within their academic disciplines that directly impacts communities. This model of undergraduate research facilitates growth in several crucial areas: critical thinking; the ability to synthesize data from different sources; and, somewhat ironically, an understanding of what it means to belong to a disciplinary community through the experience of representing one's area to colleagues from different academic backgrounds. Jo Ann Burkhardt articulates well the impact this kind of research experience has on young scholars:

“Undergraduate researchers within the McMaster School have engaged in the inquiry process to begin the journey of becoming global citizens. Their work and practice have been informed by the professional literature, the observation of professional practice modeled by their mentors, and the opportunity to engage in meaningful, purposeful work in order to advance humanity.”

### **RESPONSIBILITY: RESPONSIVENESS, RECIPROCITY AND RESPECT**

Education for responsible global citizenship requires vigilant attention to the perspective of those with whom we partner. This priority must be evident in at least five practices: first, all community-based projects must be premised on needs identified by the community served; second, there must be an open and mutual exchange of ideas about needs and priority; third,

projects must be conducted in such a way that the wealth of local knowledge is accessed and valued; fourth, there must be a willingness to change project goals or plans in response to changing conditions; and, finally, all interactions must be based on respect, within the team and between the team and the local community.

The imperative to follow the lead of community members in developing projects is expressed well by Matt Morton of Stetson University in his essay on developing a youth program in Guatemala. We are pleased to have Morton's article as part of this *Journal*; its inclusion represents a connection with other universities engaged in work similar to that of the McMaster School. Morton's article emerged from his very informative presentation last spring at Defiance College's inaugural Collegiate Global Summit. Morton notes that the impetus for his program came from the young people themselves: "The idea for developing a community-based youth program in Cerro Alto began, appropriately, with the young. Hearing of my work establishing youth-development programs for at-risk children in the U.S., they felt that they deserved opportunities of their own. Their initiative was bold and inspiring. These young people wanted a voice."

The importance of partnerships is a point emphasized by many students and faculty throughout the *Journal*. Mary Ann Studer emphasizes that both formal and informal partnerships are crucial to successful intercultural work: "We speak of partnerships among the entities of the McMaster School for Advancing Humanity, Defiance College, and Programme for Belize with an abundance of evidence about the effectiveness of institutional endeavors. But this effectiveness pales in comparison to the partnerships that develop between individuals on the ground. Partnerships between students and faculty and between our team from the U.S. and the local Belizeans are the real strength of these experiences."

These partnerships provide the opportunity for mutual learning. Both the service provided to communities and the educational benefits for students are enhanced when partnerships are premised on reciprocity. Recent Defiance College graduate Allison Fitzenrider observes this phenomenon: "As a social worker, I feel there is nothing greater than the partnerships between people because they cultivate peace, equality, and social justice. I chose to work in the Cambodian Women's Crisis Center (CWCC) because I had been working at House of Ruth, a local domestic violence shelter, for nearly three years. I had experience in crisis intervention and a special knowledge about the dynamics of domestic violence. I felt that working with the CWCC was a great opportunity to share my experiences with women across the globe and help educate ourselves about the global crisis



due to domestic violence. My work in Cambodia allowed me to gain so much more than I gave." The specialized knowledge a social work student brought to the Cambodian agency increased her capacity to help them develop services, and the excellent work of the agency within a vastly different – and more onerous – cultural and legal framework provided invaluable educational insights to a young professional.

Responsiveness to community needs often, and sometimes unexpectedly, involves the willingness and ability to shift focus and adjust to changing conditions. Steve Smith alludes to this need for cooperation and collaboration to make things work: "One reason the OAC [Ohio Arts Council] sent me to Chile was because of my skills in scavenging materials and creative problem solving when it comes to making tooling. The arc welder I was given to use would only weld about an inch before blowing all the fuses in the center. For our compressed air, we had to borrow a small portable air compressor from a gas station. Instead of using traditional air line fittings, we used a lot of duct tape, but we made it work. . . . As we all struggled with language and math, we did a lot of laughing. Gomero, Cotreras, and Ysenbaert soon became not just students but comrades in clay." All members of McMaster teams, whether students or faculty, would recognize three essential truths in what Smith describes: problem solving

may be the most important professional skill required of and acquired through international projects (and widely applicable in other contexts as well); duct tape is a piece of equipment whose utility crosses all disciplines when carrying out projects in third-world countries; and, most crucial, laughing together breaks down cultural barriers and sets the stage for collaboration based on recognition of and respect for our common humanity.

### **GLOBAL AWARENESS: ENCOUNTERING CULTURAL DIFFERENCE**

Education for global understanding frequently involves a close encounter with ideas, cultural practices, and values far different from one's own. The ability to take account of worldviews fundamentally different from one's own is central to education for global citizenship.

There is a paradox here familiar to those who work in culturally diverse settings. On the one hand, work abroad reinforces a conviction of essential humanity; children laugh the same the world over and basic human needs for food, shelter, and safety are ubiquitous. On the other hand, however, if one is really listening, right along with this recognition of commonality comes a discovery of real differences – the realization that ways of viewing the world so seemingly self-evident as to need no explication are in fact not universal but culturally specific.

The New Year's Day 2006 project in Cambodia was an example of this encounter with difference for the fifteen students and their mentors who took part in building a fence to contain a cow. The McMaster team and Sophal Lang Stagg, our primary partner in Cambodia, sought a way to help Hin Kaingch, a blind grandmother widowed by the Khmer Rouge who is raising her four grandchildren orphaned by AIDS. As Bonner Leader Coordinator Kathryn Litle observes, "The Defiance College team was willing to do anything to help this woman, but all she wanted was the fence. The Bonner Leaders came to understand the full value of a cow to survival in rural Cambodia – and the worth of a fence."

One of the measures of global education is, ironically, the ability to be comfortable with discomfort, to welcome difficult encounters that may test preconceptions and challenge the order of things. For students, working through a language barrier and within a vastly different cultural context can be the catalyst to both personal and professional growth.

Education student Jessica Hull describes well the process of finding comfort with discomfort as she worked on language instruction in Thailand.



I came up with an idea to develop a story that would incorporate many of the vocabulary words listed in the Nongbua School's curriculum. . . . Each group of twenty-five students would work together to illustrate the book, which I would put together and read to them. . . . My hope was that as the children were illustrating their pages of the book, they would be internalizing the vocabulary word, thereby committing it to memory. . . .

Upon arriving at Nongbua School, I had no idea whether the lesson I had developed would be effective. . . . The nervousness I felt before teaching Thai children for the first time was unlike anything I had ever felt, but as I began teaching, all of the nervousness melted away. . . . Conveying to the children exactly what I wanted them to do in the absence of a translator was an obstacle, but we were able to communicate through body language and pantomime. . . . Essential, we all worked together as a team to produce an illustrated book.

At times the discomfort comes not from a positive opportunity for professional growth, but from discovering unanticipated ethical implications to apparently positive interventions. In Belize, the WATER project focuses on environmental preservation – a definite good. In the project’s second year, however, student researchers began to ask what impact the preservation of a huge tract of land from development had on the indigenous subsistence farmers. Jordan Plant poses the problem thus: “the people on the periphery of this natural wonder may be suffering because of its very existence. With such a great amount of land being withheld from the population of Belize, those living on the borders may struggle to have access to the bountiful resources the protected land has to offer. This is the issue that I wanted to study.” The history of this unspoiled terrain further complicates the question. As Matthew Schultz explains: “The Rio Bravo Conservation and Management District, which is the largest forest reserve in the country, was one of the earliest and most extensive . . . properties from which mahogany was cut. . . . The Rio Bravo is not an *undeveloped* wilderness that has been preserved; rather, it is a legacy of *underdevelopment* that is in the process of being redeemed.”

### THE HABIT OF CITIZENSHIP

Responsible citizenship is only partly a matter of philosophical commitment since being a citizen requires active involvement in communities and working with others toward a common goal. If students learn and practice the skills of citizenship while in college, there is greater chance they will continue such involvement after graduation. Just as the ability and passion for lifelong learning is a goal of liberal arts education, so should be inculcating the habit of citizenship.

For students in McMaster School cohort programs, organizing the Collegiate Global Summit in late spring 2006 was one such opportunity to practice the skills of citizenship. Initiated by the students in the new Citizen Leader Program, and funded largely through the grant from the McGregor Fund in Detroit, Michigan that made possible the creation of the Citizen Leader Program, the Global Summit involved all three cohort programs – Citizen Leader, Carolyn M. Small Honors Program, and Bonner Leader Program. Student organizers decided on the theme, “It’s Up to You: Students Impacting the Globe” and managed logistics for the conference. The Bonner Foundation of Princeton, New Jersey also provided extensive support through partnering with Defiance College and running the Bonner Summer Leadership Institute concurrently with the Global Summit. Representatives from over seventy colleges, universities, and community organizations attended the combined event.



Creating and running a conference focused on student potential to make a difference in the world had dual benefits for the many students involved. The sessions provided invaluable information about work being done by students and faculty around the nation, and the process of working in partnership on and off the campus provided a lesson in community organizing. One small group of students decided to run a silent auction of college gear from participating schools and had the satisfaction of raising over \$800 for UNICEF. The conference provided education on student efficacy at both the theoretical and functional levels.

McMaster School programs structure learning through this layering of very practical experiential learning and academic research. Whether the work involves garment workers in Cambodia, milpa farmers in Belize, or schoolchildren in Guatemala and Defiance, Ohio, the goal is the same: deep and lasting learning that will provide a positive impact on communities immediately, and untold benefits in the future through the education of students as effective and committed citizens.