Society for College and University Planning SCUP Fellow Research Project Final Report

Fostering Innovation on Ohio's Co-Located Campuses Through Collaborative Planning

Jeremy W. Webster, PhD
SCUP Fellow 2018–2019

The Society for College and University Planning

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MEET JEREMY W. WEBSTER

Jeremy Webster, PhD, is dean of Ohio University's Zanesville campus. As dean, he is responsible for leading all aspects of campus operations, including academic programming, student services, facilities, and budget. Previously, Webster was dean of Ohio University's Honors Tutorial College (HTC). In that role, he supervised the college's 35 tutorial programs, which are modeled after the Oxford-Cambridge tutorial method of instruction, the Cutler Scholars Program, and the Office of Nationally Competitive Awards. Before becoming dean of HTC in 2009, he was an associate professor of English. He is the author of *Performing Libertinism in Charles II's Court: Politics, Drama, Sexuality* (Palgrave 2005) and has published articles on various aspects of masculinity and politics in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century British literature.

Webster was a first-generation college student, and graduated summa cum laude from Texas A&M University (TAMU) with a BA in history. Subsequently, he earned an MA in English from TAMU and a PhD in English from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. In 2015-2016, Webster was a fellow of the American Council on Education (ACE), one of the premier higher education leadership programs to prepare senior leaders to serve American colleges and universities.

WHAT PROMPTED YOUR CHOICE OF RESEARCH TOPIC?

In May 2016, Ohio's General Assembly charged a task force for creating opportunities for shared governance on co-located campuses. The assignment was to create a model of shared governance for Ohio's seven co-located campuses, ones on which a community college and a regional branch of a four-year university are located on the same campus or adjoining campuses.

The task force recommended that co-located institutions:

1. Share services in order to reduce costs for students.

2. Create formal agreements concerning those shared services and review them periodically.

3. Submit an annual report to the state detailing how their shared services are saving money for students and their families.

4. Collaborate on a joint campus master plan.

5. Share a trustee or advisory board member between the institutions to promote shared governance.

When I became campus dean of Ohio University's Zanesville (OUZ) campus in June 2017, I assumed responsibility for enacting those recommendations at my campus. I worked in collaboration with Dr. Chad Brown, president of Zane State College (ZSC). OUZ and ZSC had previously adopted a memorandum of understanding concerning a range of shared services and cost sharing, including a bookstore, library, maintenance, facilities, utilities, security, and counseling services. We have a strong culture of cooperation and coexistence, and Dr. Brown and I quickly proved the accuracy of the report's assertion that "Collaboration, effectiveness, and efficiency is deeply influenced by the relationships with presidents and deans who lead co-located institutions" (8).

In 2017-18, OUZ and ZSC attempted their first academic collaboration, a joint program centered around *The Undergraduate Experience: Focusing on What Matters Most*, authored by Peter Felten, John N. Gardner, Charles C. Schroeder, Leo M. Lambert, and Betsy O. Barefoot. Mr. Gardner spent half of the day at ZSC and half the day at OUZ. In the evening, a joint program on how Ohio's dual enrollment

program, called College Credit Plus, was affecting what we traditionally call the first-year experience was presented. The concept was how the first-year experience would change when the "first year" was spread across multiple years. Despite our collaborative intentions, the event did not bring faculty and staff from the two institutions together, physically or culturally. Instead, it foregrounded deep divisions and antagonism.

In reflecting on the event, I recognized that inadequate planning, existing institutional cultures of self-interest and self-preservation, and the general lack of motivation among faculty and staff to collaborate may have led to its failure. I concluded that we needed a stronger framework for collaborative planning and a way to overcome inter-institutional competition if co-located institutions wanted to collaborate successfully.

THE PROJECT

My project focused on whether co-located institutions, specifically, and competing institutions of higher education, more generally, could use "collaborative planning." It is a conceptual framework from urban planning that emphasizes "partnership, stakeholder involvement, collaboration, and consensus-oriented decision-making" as core principles of planning (Vandenbussche, Edelenbos, and Eshuis 2017). It is an effective tool for transcending competition, negotiating disagreements, and achieving increased institutional collaboration and innovation.

HOW DID YOU APPROACH AND CARRY OUT YOUR RESEARCH PROJECT?

My first step was to investigate what other co-located campuses have achieved in response to the task force's recommendations. I contacted the deans at each of those co-locations to request copies of their campuses' shared services agreements. I received and reviewed agreements from the following institutions (in addition to the one between Ohio University Zanesville and Zane State College):

- Central Ohio Technical College and Ohio State University - Newark

- North Central State College and Ohio State University - Mansfield

- Rhodes State College and Ohio State University - Lima

- Stark State College and Kent State - Stark

Other institutions either did not have such agreements or did not forward them to me. The second step in that phase of my research was to visit two campuses that had the most detailed shared services agreements: Newark and Mansfield. During those visits I interviewed the campus leadership about their efforts to implement the task force's recommendations. In each case, those campuses had adopted all or nearly all of the recommendations.

Those documents and campus visits, however, suggested that I needed to define "collaboration" more specifically. I began to make a distinction between the task force's recommendations, which, I argue, have led to *operational* collaboration on co-located campuses, and what I came to call *innovative* collaboration.

I defined operational collaboration as a focus on campus operations, shared services, cost efficiencies through a division of expenses, and sharing physical space. In contrast, my project sought to understand how to foster innovative collaboration on co-located campuses, which I defined as a focus on creating new partnerships, designing new programs, generating new revenue through the sharing of financial resources, and sharing intellectual and cultural capital. In sum, innovative collaboration anticipates the future by sharing resources to create new collaborations; operational collaboration divides expenses to maintain the overall status quo. The question became: How do co-located institutions move from operational to innovative collaboration?

WHAT IS "COLLABORATIVE PLANNING"?

Although coined by Judith Innes in 1995, the concept of "collaborative planning" has been most fully articulated in Patsy Healey's *Collaborative Planning: Shaping Places in Fragmented Societies*. Collaborative planning is a framework in urban planning for dealing with matters of collective concern that arise from the coexistence in shared spaces of cultural communities with very different priorities and perspectives. In Healey's framework, stakeholders are brought together and engaged in a dialogic process that respects their different priorities and perspectives while achieving common planning goals. Collaboration occurs when stakeholders from those cultural communities use dialog to make relational links across cultural barriers, organizational divisions, and power differentials toward building a new shared collaborative cultural community that reframes and restructures ways of proceeding. A key element of that framework is the use of democratic dialog over an extended period of time to build trust among stakeholders, which creates the foundation for collaboration.

The coexistence of communities with different priorities, perspectives, and cultures in shared spaces describes well Ohio's co-located campuses. Our previous failed attempt at collaboration suggested that the Zanesville campus would provide a fruitful test for Healey's framework. During his visits to ZSC and OUZ, Mr. Gardner frequently compared OUZ with ZSC in such areas as student recruitment, retention, and postgraduate placement. Those comparisons were not welcomed by many OUZ faculty and staff.

For example, when asked via an internal online Qualtrics survey how positively or negatively they viewed the session, twenty OUZ faculty respondents (just less than half of all OUZ faculty) indicated a mixed response: nine indicated a positive response, four indicated that they had neither a positive nor a negative response, and seven had a negative response. (ZSC did not distribute a survey to its faculty.) Some faculty comments on the survey suggested that potential antagonism against ZSC might have significantly affected faculty views of the workshop. Those respondents complained that Mr. Gardner "kept repeating that Zane State had it better," that "he had a preference for Zane State," and that he was more positive toward Zane State "than I was expecting." Some faculty were offended that Gardner "plac[ed] us in a position lower than Zane State in almost every way," which they found "counterproductive and insulting." As one colleague concluded, "I think [some faculty] would have rather not had a shared experience with ZSC. I think it was a 'big idea' that we were not ready for yet."

Like the aforementioned respondent, I concluded that academic collaboration was likely too big of an idea for the institutions' faculty and staff to embrace at that point. In particular, the OUZ survey responses suggested that institutional competition between OUZ and ZSC had potentially created a general sense of antagonism, a hostility to collaboration, among members of each institution. That sense of antagonism, while not necessarily felt by all faculty and staff, was nevertheless pervasive enough that it should be overcome before the institutions are ready to collaborate on any future "big ideas." One source of antagonism between those institutions was the fact that, contrary to the state's intent, co-location does not eliminate competition between institutions; in fact, it may compound it, because co-located institutions routinely compete for state resources, graduating high school students, and adult learners interested in returning to college. They also compete for status within their communities, as well as for community support in the form of private donations, foundation grants, volunteers, and experiential learning opportunities. As each institution's financial resources have declined over the past decade, the sense of co-located institutions as competitors—at least on the Zanesville campus—stands as a significant barrier to more innovative academic collaboration.

The idea that competition among groups of people leads to mutual antagonism is not new. As early as the late 1940s and early 1950s, Muzafer Sherif and his research team conducted a series of experiments at a boys' summer camp to study intergroup dynamics; the most famous of those studies is known as the Robbers

Cave Experiment (Schofield 2010). The outcome of that research is a body of work known as Realistic Group Conflict Theory (RGCT), which argues that, when groups compete for limited resources, the competition leads to intergroup stereotyping, antagonism, and, in extreme cases, physical conflict (Schofield 2010). According to that theory, competition creates antagonism between groups because one group's success in obtaining scarce resources prevents the other group from acquiring them. RGCT also suggests that cooperation in pursuit of superordinate goals, i.e., mutually desired outcomes that are unobtainable without such cooperation, has the potential over time to reduce conflictual competition and to create positive relations among members of the now cooperating groups (Schofield 2010). That theory suggests that OUZ and ZSC might overcome their mutual antagonism if the institutions are forced to cooperate with one another to solve a problem that neither can solve on its own. We needed to bring all stakeholders together and use sustained dialogue to link our perspectives and interests to transform our separate cultural communities into a new one, and to build innovative programs that benefit everyone.

COMMUNITY SUMMITS ON THE FUTURE OF WORK AND EDUCATION IN MUSKINGUM COUNTY

The goal for my fellowship project became to use collaborative planning to create a strategic plan for workforce development in Muskingum County during the following 10 years. The objectives would be to foster growth industries in health care and social assistance through new academic partnerships and to lower levels of poverty, increase levels of educational attainment, and promote in-migration for our community. I intend to invite not only Zane State College but also all other stakeholders in our county to help plan our community's economic future. It is a goal that is clearly bigger than any one institution can address, but also one in which all of the county's institutions of higher education have a stake. It is also a goal that, if achieved, would benefit each of our institutions through increased revenue. My hypothesis was that, by working together through a collaborative planning process, we could forge a new, inter-institutional community poised to lead our county into a prosperous economic future.

To that end, I began a conversation with the presidents of Zane State College and Muskingum University, a private liberal arts college also housed in our county. I also invited the president of the Zanesville-Muskingum County Chamber of Commerce

to collaborate on the project. We quickly decided to hold four community summits between September 2019 and April 2020. Each summit was to be organized around a keynote address by an outside party and would offer attendees breakfast and/or lunch. We also agreed that each session would include substantial time for conversation among the participants, and that we would report out questions and comments, using them to plan the next session in the series.

1	2	3	4
Recruiting, Educating, and Managing the Emerging Workforce	Anticipating the Future of Muskingum County	Responding to the Future: Education and the Economy	Working Together to Shape the Future

Finally, we identified a list of essential stakeholders to invite to the summits. In addition to the chamber and our own institutions, we agreed that participation by the following groups was crucial to our success:

- Muskingum County school districts

- Zanesville-Muskingum County Port Authority

- Appalachian Partnership for Economic Growth

- Appalachian P-20 Council

- Our state representative and senator

- Zanesville municipal government representatives

- Muskingum County commissioners

- Local business and industry leaders

The dates for the four summits were set: September 27, 2019; November 8, 2019; February 21, 2020; and April 17, 2020.

ASSESSING COLLABORATIVE PLANNING

The final step in my fellowship project was to design a method of assessing the success of the community summits. After reviewing assessment literature in the field of collaborative planning, I adapted Annika Agger and Karl Löfgren's work on democratic assessment. In their assessment framework, planning is assessed not based on policy outcomes but by its level of collaboration. Agger and Löfgren proposed five areas of assessment for collaborative-planning processes. First, the level of access, inclusion, and participation in the planning process is assessed. While that includes the number of people who attend the events, it also emphasizes assessing participants' sense that their input was welcomed and helped to shape the conversation. The second area of assessment is the quality of public deliberation. In that category, the assessment evaluates the participants' ability to engage in widespread, public dialogue. Third, the assessment documents the level of democratic adaptiveness at each event: To what extent does participants' involvement change the direction of conversation (as opposed to following a strict, unchanging agenda)? The fourth assessment gauges the participants' sense that the lead organizers of the planning events are accountable for addressing their input. Finally, collaborative planning is assessed based on whether it develops new democratic identities among participants. Each of our community summits will end/ended with an assessment instrument with questions drawn from those categories. For the purposes of the project, it is more important to assess those elements than to evaluate the products of the collaboration—although those outcomes will also be assessed at a time in the future.

WHAT SPECIFICALLY DID YOU LEARN FROM YOUR RESEARCH THAT OTHER PLANNERS SHOULD KNOW, AND WILL BENEFIT THEM IN THEIR WORK?

In coming from a non-planning background, perhaps the most important lesson I learned over the course of the project is that adequate planning takes time, broad and meaningful stakeholder participation, and frequent communication. Indeed, the early planning meetings for our community summits ended up multiplying by four the number of events (and the number of months) we needed in order to achieve our goals.

If planning is to be truly collaborative, it requires fewer boundaries—not only on time but also on who can participate, how they participate, and how much dialogue (in multiple directions) needs to occur.

I also learned that the culture of self-interest and self-preservation fostered in a climate of competition has to be addressed head-on. The first step in bringing OUZ, ZSC, and Muskingum University together to plan the events was to acknowledge that, yes, we are competitors—but that we also can't solve our county's problems individually.

Finally, I learned that innovative collaboration is unlikely to be mandated by the state, which, at least in Ohio, is focused more intensely on efficiency and cost savings rather than on investment and revenue generation. Over the course of the project, I came to see that looking backward to solve the problems of the past is relatively easy compared to the difficult work of imagining collaborative solutions for the future.

LAST WORDS

HOW DID YOUR SCUP COACHES SUPPORT YOU IN YOUR PROJECT?

Linda Baer (senior fellow at Civitas Learning) and David Cox (professor emeritus of Public Administration, University of Memphis) were exemplary mentors throughout the project. Linda and David met with me once a month for an hour-long phone call throughout the 2018-2019 academic year. We alternated meetings of all three of us with one-on-one meetings. Linda often took on the role of advising me on the theoretical aspects of my project, while David generally advised me on the praxis of partnering with community organizations, nonprofits, and businesses. It was also helpful that each of my mentors frequently reflected back to me what they had heard me say when defining key terms, identifying next steps, and engaging in fundamental ideas. Perhaps their biggest support was to push me to think bigger, to run with an idea until it couldn't be developed further, and to include more partners in my project than I had originally intended to include. The ambitiousness of the community summits is a direct result of their cheerleading, support, and encouragement.

HOW DID THE SCUP FELLOWS EXPERIENCE IMPACT YOU PERSONALLY?

As a result of the fellowship, I developed an extensive knowledge of Ohio's system of co-located campuses. When my university needed an interim dean at one of our other regional campuses (that is also considered co-located by the state), I became the natural choice to serve in that temporary role. As a result, I am now dean of one campus and interim dean of another about an hour away. Although I will not have the length of time at the second campus necessary to initiate the level of collaboration we are working to achieve in Muskingum County, I am working to help my colleagues at that campus to better understand the path toward a more collaborative relationship with the co-located technical college. My increased understanding of collaborative planning is enriching my professional work across the board, and I hope that results in a positive future for my local community.

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