

Greetings from the Pennsylvania State University, host of the 2008 National Outreach Scholarship Conference—*Innovation and Leadership for Engagement*.

As vice president for outreach at Penn State, please let me say how delighted the university was to host the ninth National Outreach Scholarship Conference—*Innovation and Leadership for Engagement*. The primary focus for the conference, held at Penn State's University Park campus on October 7–9, 2008, was “The Scholarship of Outreach and Engagement: What Is It and Why Does It Matter?” The scholarly presentations and discussions surrounding that topic form the basis of this special issue of the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*.

We were very pleased to have the National Outreach Scholarship Conference return to Penn State, where it originated. The genesis of a national conference on the scholarship of outreach and engagement emerged from a dialogue among Penn State faculty members and administrators ten years ago. The initial Outreach Scholarship Partnership—Penn State, Ohio State, and the University of Wisconsin–Extension—has now grown to nine universities. These additional partner institutions include the University of Georgia, University of Alabama, North Carolina State University, Michigan State University, University of Kentucky, and Purdue University. Colleagues from across the nation and around the world provided plenary sessions, panel discussions, and poster exhibits reflecting on how engagement and public scholarship can enhance a broad, integrated approach to teaching, research, and service, and discussed what communities expect from engaged universities. The 2008 conference welcomed almost 400 participants from 36 states, 72 institutions, and 4 countries.

The breadth and depth of the scholarly initiatives surrounding the National Outreach Scholarship Conference reflect increased focus on engaged scholarship within the academy. The presentations demonstrated the collective engagement impact of all participating institutions—a powerful force for addressing the educational, cultural, civic, and social needs of all our stakeholders. Containing a striking variety of stimulating and thought-provoking articles and presentations, this special issue of the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* illustrates the quality and depth of engagement scholarship being conducted at higher education institutions across the nation and around the world.

From the reflective and challenging addresses by our keynote speakers to the enthusiasm of the Emerging Engagement Scholars workshop, which provided advanced doctoral students and early-career faculty members with facilitated discussion, mentoring, and presentations to enhance their practice of community engaged scholarship, the conference explored issues, raised questions, and invited dialogue surrounding the scholarship of engagement. I offer sincere thanks to the National Outreach Conference Planning Committee for arranging this exceptional content.

Finally, I would like to commend and thank our cosponsors for their immeasurable contributions to the success of the conference. The continued leadership of these individuals and institutions is essential to the advancement of our outreach agendas.

We welcome your comments.

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