The Cambridge Handbook of Service Learning and Community Engagement

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Research and Organizing with Immigrant Workers

Stephen Phillion

The experience of forming a successful Faculty Research Group on Immigrant Workers in Minnesota (RG) should be an optimistic story promoting the opportunities and virtues of campus-based community engagement. Despite this achievement, I have become even more critical of community engagement's limitations both on and off campus. In particular, the impact that neoliberalism has on higher education seriously challenges and undercuts democratic collaborations for radical education and social change. This chapter, while noting certain successful efforts, focuses on how neoliberal conditions limit efforts to promote more political and progressive engagement activities for students, faculty, and community partners. In fact, my experience demonstrates that neoliberalism and its attendant values undermine the very public and engaged missions of higher education by ultimately rewarding and promoting a rigged meritocracy and corporate hegemony.

The RG began as an idea in the spring of 2008, when St. Cloud State University (SCSU) president Earl Potter III asked departments to propose new initiatives linking campus research and local community issues. Potter arrived at SCSU in the fall of 2007 and immediately proclaimed that both local and global community engagement would be vital components of the school's mission. Moreover, his administration emphasized the need for greater interdisciplinary collaboration combined with increased "efficiencies" as crucial elements of university restructuring. Several colleagues and I believed that a cross-college research group and possible center on immigrant workers in Minnesota would meet most of these despite our apprehensions about the term "efficiencies," which in the language of corporatization often means budget cuts and work speed-ups. We did see opportunities for successful and creative, democratic engagement, though.

St. Cloud is home to between 6000 and 8000 Somali refugees and a growing population of South Sudanese, Vietnamese, and Hmong immigrants. The region also plays host to a large population of Chicano and
Latino immigrants. For example, between 2000 and 2010, the Latino population in St. Cloud increased by over 100 percent, while in the nearby smaller city of Cold Spring (home to the Gold’n Plump poultry processing factory) Latinos have increased by 635 percent (CensusViewer, 2012). While SCSU addressed many issues related to multiculturalism, I made the argument that most of the work was too narrowly focused on diversity among students and mainstream concerns about representation, tolerance, and personal identities. Too often these conversations about diversity and inclusion ignore a more systematic account of how capitalism historically structured white supremacy and currently recasts racial inequalities in ways that Rodney Coates refers to as “covert racism” (Coates, 2012; Philion, 2009; Reed, 2009).

In contrast, our idea proposed to conduct research shaped and informed by the needs of local community organizations, social service providers, and others who were involved in immigrant workers’ issues locally and around the state. These organizations and workers would change the dynamics of campus discussions about race, ethnicity, and identity, bringing an inherently class-based analysis to our evolving understanding of multiculturalism and discrimination. Such efforts would also challenge our own elite, professionally academic forms of doing research and producing knowledge. Instead, we would participate in research not solely driven by academic needs, but created in collaboration with local community-based activists in immigrant communities.

Nyden, Hossfeld, and Nyden’s (2011) conceptualization of public sociology calls for such organic ties between academics and community activists engaged in political policy debates and direct action. The Labor/Community Strategy Center, based in Los Angeles, provides another model for activist-generated research with the goal of direct political actions to secure systemic changes in issues such as public transportation, racist environmental enforcement practices, unemployment, and nonlivable wages (Bullard & Johnson, 2000; Hamilton, 1990; The Labor/Community Strategy Center, n.d.). Similarly, José Calderón’s (2007) work in day laborer centers in California integrated student and faculty research and learning with programs needed to serve and empower primarily Latino migrant workers.

Yet we believed our notion also included a fresh approach. Although centers on immigration studies existed in Minnesota, none focused specifically on contemporary Minnesotan immigrants, examined immigrants in the context of work, or looked to apply research to political action and policy change. A colleague in economics, with experience in research on immigration, went to the College of Social Sciences (COSS) interim dean to secure written and financial support for this project. Overall, our proposal was well received throughout the formal process of being vetted by different administrators. By the fall of 2009, the RG was an official COSS research group with a budget of $8000 (plus buyout of the director’s class reductions) and hosted biweekly meetings focused on members’ research projects.
The Research Group Goes to Work

Initially the group planned and hosted a “mini-conference” at the end of spring, 2008. The “Global Goes Local Conference” examined the social conditions of immigrant workers in Minnesota and featured three keynote speakers and ten panels. The speakers addressed issues including the experience of Muslim migrants in their journeys from Europe to the United States (Yaghmaian, 2006), demographic trends of recent immigration in the state, and comparisons between newly arrived immigrants in central Minnesota and those who came in the late nineteenth century (Wingerd, 2010). What stood out about the conference were the many panels featuring participants one rarely sees at academic conferences on immigration – namely non-academic immigrants themselves (see St. Cloud State University, 2015).

Panels featured workers who had organized campaigns for labor rights, including Minneapolis’ Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en Lucha and workers organized through efforts by the Service Employees International Union to stop “silent raids” (Bacon, 2009). Others accompanied worker center staff and union organizers on panels. Several panels included immigrant small business owners and immigrants involved in nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that support immigrant business development. Featuring immigrant panelists also shifted the source of knowledge production, legitimizing workers as “experts” both on their own conditions and experiences and on the policies necessary to fight racism and exploitation. In other words, workers became more than just victims. Meanwhile, students and faculty attending the conference could compare these presenters’ stories with those of their own ancestors, who, when faced with exploitation and injustice, often engaged in collective forms of action to make social change. The conference and other early activities proved the RG’s potential to grow and become a Research Center. Given the support from SCSU’s president, the RG was poised for success.

Neoliberal Civic Engagement: The Context

Nonetheless, this RG story did not progress without challenges. Any new group or center faces obstacles when trying to get off the ground. Despite many logistical issues and the structural and cultural differences that make faculty and student collaborations with workers and immigrants inherently difficult, the greatest obstacles emanated from neoliberalism’s impact on our institutions, economic policies, and social values. The focus on individual students as competitive market units, the focus on producing knowledge for intellectual commodity markets, and the ideological submission to market-driven legitimacy have all permeated and, in many ways, reconstructed the contemporary university. Doing radical social justice work to challenge such forces, while promoting community values and the “public good,” does not easily fit such trends.
Yet, ironically, community engagement has developed and thrived, in part because of its compatibility with neoliberalism. Noteworthy here is the ease of linking community service and volunteerism with neoliberal values of personal responsibility and individual development as solutions to structural inequalities. Neoliberalism promotes individual giving and self-improvement instead of analytical and active practices that produce anticapitalist, antiracist, and emancipatory work. Meanwhile, engaged teaching and learning have navigated rationalized corporate narratives about assessment outcomes to prove its pedagogical value. And promoting community engagement gives higher education institutions excellent public relations as they seek more private and public funds.

Thus, neoliberal ideology can provide a healthy institutional framework for a group such as the RG to grow, but significantly limits the kind and measure of successful impact on structural inequalities and social justice outcomes. How does neoliberalism create such a powerful dichotomy to encourage community-based work but obscure the ways in which it restricts the political and democratic intentions of critical community engagement?

Neoliberalism, Ideology, and the Role of Nongovernmental Organizations

The notion of neoliberalism is hardly new and usually refers to the intense marketization of human relations on all levels of economic, political, and cultural life. The “commodification of everything” is fueled by rapidly deregulating financial instruments across the globe, which enabled corporate capital to saturate all global activity and maximize profits everywhere on everything. According to Harvey (2007), the following are key components to neoliberal capitalist development.

1. The human race is best served by “liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms” bolstered by commitments to “private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (pp. 2–3).
2. The state’s role is to reinforce this orientation and protect it from challenges while remaining minimally involved in market processes for individual workers as both commodities and competitive personal contractors.
3. The result is an unfettered race to deregulate markets and privatize public entities to maximize profits and reduce counter-neoliberal narratives and movements.

In other words, neoliberalism is not simply the call for free markets along the lines of laissez-faire governments (Henwood, 2003; Wood, 2002); instead, it signifies the wholesale retreat from the post–World War II Keynesian consensus that supported both an expanding welfare state (health, education, social security, etc.) and a corporate-driven, pro-growth agenda (Davis, 1986; Marcuse, 1989). Neoliberalism destroyed this consensus.
After almost thirty years of efforts to dismantle the public sector and the welfare state, corporations and legislators have convinced the public that the only meaningful political issue is that of managing budget deficits—deficits created by neoliberal tax cuts and corporate imperial conflicts in the first place. "Austerity" narratives present a major political and ideological element of neoliberalism's triumph, as the proposal of raising taxes for public investment in jobs, education, or other social programs remains largely taboo (Albo, Gindin, & Panitch, 2010). The state, as official storyteller for neoliberalism, helps ruling classes manage recurring financial crises and its impact on middle-class and poor workers by supporting NGOs that try to minimize the mass hardships and suffering created by a highly bifurcated economy, on the one hand, and the loss of public sector services, on the other.

David Wagner (2000) has argued that the prominence of the NGO (or the "not for profit" organization) as a means of addressing social inequalities is but one more sign of a dying public sector. Still, NGOs require some public funding and governmental support in order to sustain their work. Indeed, while NGOs certainly can play a "progressive" role in arguing for a public agenda, mostly they are constrained from transcending a social service function (Dolgon, 2014; INCITE! Women of Color against Violence, 2007). Whether or not they are ideologically able to engage in more militant ideological or structural change efforts, NGOs remain bound by another sine qua non of neoliberalism, namely, short-term outcome assessments that determine whether or not more funding will be available from either private or public sources. Community engagement in higher education is almost entirely about university faculty and students partnering with community nonprofits, thus fulfilling the mission of engagement, but it is unable to address the political and economic restrictions that NGOs face. But educational institutions have come to face these same restrictions.

The Corporatization of Higher Education and the Rationalization of Engagement

Education is one major area in the United States that has attracted great investor interest. As early as 1992, Lehman Brothers issued an investor research study suggesting that educational maintenance organizations (EMOs) could create the kind of profit-making opportunities that health maintenance organizations did in the 1980s. Over the last twenty-five years, cash-strapped communities have invited private companies to rescue public education, resulting in more and more charter schools, high stakes tests, and technology-driven pedagogy. Despite the immense and repeated failures of EMOs such as Edison, Mosaica and White Hat, millions in profits have been made by these corporations while local communities and school districts have been decimated. Despite failure after failure, the neoliberal ideology promoting privatization as both efficient and effective persists.
Higher education poses a particular problem for neoliberalism. Once taken for granted as bedrock for post–World War II development, since the 1980s public universities have received greater pressure to restructure as a result of declining federal and state support. University deans, presidents, and their staffs have been transformed into professional fundraisers and revenue producers, often spending more time off campus securing donations, grants, and investments than on campus (Twitchell, 2004). Colleges and universities now adopt corporate business models to increase revenue and be “consumer friendly” not only to students as “customers” but ultimately to the private sector, which determines what kind of curriculum gets offered to produce particular types of workers (Newfield, 2008; Washburn, 2005). By employing corporate values, strategies, ethics, and policies, higher education not only supports business and industry, it has itself become a corporation. Yet, as mentioned above, during this same time period, and especially in the last decade, university administrators increasingly tout campus-based community engagement because it simultaneously promotes neoliberal aims while deflecting neoliberal critique.

**Neoliberal Universities and Community Engagement**

Neoliberal logic essentially removes or peripheralizes spaces where challenges to capitalist ideology on university campuses can be developed, promoted, and acted on, all the while encouraging students and faculty to use “critical thinking skills” as they become “community engaged.” Put another way, university-based community engagement, as Randy Stoecker argues in Chapter 36, means little if it involves those who have no experience in community organizing. Community engagement typically channels students into one or another form of social service, nonprofit organization, or involvement in the enterprises of marginalized groups. However, the kinds of critical thinking that lead to collective acts of defiance against structures of economic, political, and social power are not on the agenda of most university administrators, the corporate boards they serve, the wealthy foundations and corporations that fund them, or even the NGOs and nonprofit organizations where engaged faculty and students work. It is precisely the type of counterhegemonic thinking and action, deeply critical of the neoliberal ethic, that is almost entirely missing from the community engagement discourse on most US campuses.

Harnessing higher education to the needs of business is not new (Bowles & Gintis, 1977). Bowles and Gintis (2002) laid out how primary and secondary schools mainly train students to be compliant workers and promoted “the interests of the owners of the leading businesses” (p. 2). They argued that “the same conflict-ridden evolution” of educational structures and purposes was strikingly evident in higher education as well (p. 2). David Noble (1998) conceptualized the neoliberal university as a “digital diploma mill,” arguing that online technologies have been developed in a way that is primarily...
about making money. In short, the new technology of education, like the automation of other industries, robs faculty of their knowledge and skills, their control over their working lives, the product of their labor, and, ultimately, their means of livelihood.

(p. 33)

Linkages between the university and corporations, the military industrial complex, big ag, high tech, and other key venues of capital accumulation are, again, not new to neoliberalism. What is new is the degree of market value saturation existing in a university system where it is now increasingly taken for granted that education must learn from corporate models in order to produce more efficiently. Also new is the ideological narrative that can legitimize support for progressive pedagogies such as service learning and community engagement, but circumscribe such practices by rationalizing outcomes and limiting partnerships to "effective and efficient" nonprofit organizations and NGOs.

Giroux (2002) argues that the result of reshaping higher education guided by a neoliberal ethic has been an incessant encroachment on the university as a public locus for intellectual discourse and development:

The legacy of public discourse appears to have faded as the U.S. university reinvents itself by giving in to the demands of the marketplace. Venture capitalists now scour colleges and universities in search of big profits made through licensing agreements, the control of intellectual property rights, and promoting and investing in university spin-off companies. In the age of money and profit, academic disciplines gain stature almost exclusively through their exchange value on the market, and students now rush to take courses and receive professional credentials that provide them with the cachet they need to sell themselves to the highest bidder.

(p. 432)

The traditional structures of university learning have likewise been transformed by revolutions in technology, most notably with the rapid and dramatic advances in computers and the Internet. This has only sped up a process of restructuring the learning environment on campus and in the virtual world.

This restructuring of higher education learning is centered on the notion of students as "customers." Today’s students are sold an endless array of choices that suggest learning is about selecting the right product. Expanding choice includes creating more exciting and nontraditional practices such as learning through service to the community. This trend is consistent with patterns that have been in evidence in higher education since the late 1960s:

[In the 1960s] two distinct movements for university reform gained momentum. The first was the insistent demand by black, Latino, and working-class students for access to the institutions [of higher education] as a sign of equality as well as equality of opportunity; the second was the profound dissatisfaction of mostly white, middle-class students in elite universities with the growing trend toward focusing on technical/scientific knowledge production in what Kerr called the "multiversity."

(Aronowitz, 2001, p. 91)
Ironically, what were once movements for inclusivity and equality as well as social relevance and the liberation of humanity have become ideas and practices that support traditional forms of oppression and inequality.

One element of neoliberalism’s impact on higher education is its increasingly unaffordable character. College affordability has attracted new forms of profit making as private financial aid fills the gap led by cuts to public support for higher education. New companies and financial institutions now recruit panicked students concerned about making the right investment in their futures. As students are saddled with large debts on graduation, the possibility of receiving credit for doing service work in the community while simultaneously accumulating marketable experience in the “real world” has considerable appeal. More often than not, these kinds of community engagement experiences eschew a systemic critique of the very ideology of neoliberalism that contributes to the contours of inequality in the real world (Sharzer, 2012). Community engagement takes the form of service learning or community-based internships that become one more extracurricular activity that “adds value” to their resumes for job searches in ever-tighter job markets.

Furthermore, community engagement is coupled with an ostensible development of critical thinking, itself bolstered by the promotion of critical pedagogy in the last decade. However, as Seehwa Cho (2006) has noted, this field has veered away from its original intent to organically link educators and students with counterhegemonic movements that challenge capitalist structures of economic, political, and cultural power as envisioned by Paulo Freire (1968):

> Not surprisingly, the main focus of critical pedagogues has been the project of re/making individuals or subjectivities... Not only is the individual enlightenment project naïve, but it can also lead to a moralized, rather than a politicized project... This moralized approach fails to address the issue in broader social, political, economic, and cultural contexts and thus prohibits us from searching for practical and structural solutions.
> (Cho, 2006, pp. 133–135)

It would be hard to imagine how critical thinking or community engagement could be otherwise conceptualized, given the real world of neoliberal higher education today (Deresiewicz, 2015). As departments, and indeed entire colleges, within universities are either downsized or faced with elimination, there is increasing pressure on academics who remain to “sell” their fields of knowledge production to students and also to external funders. This is most effectively accomplished by conveying statistics that prove how efficient programs are in use of resources (i.e., enrollment capacity, student to slot ratios, etc.) and in outcomes (i.e., success in the job market of graduated majors). Programs trip over themselves trying to outmarket each other as the most community active, community engaged, civically engaged, and/or global-citizenship oriented both to attract students and to fit the neoliberal university brand. This is consistent with the expanded role of branding that shapes university strategies for capturing shrinking pools of available enrollees (i.e., sources of tuition):
The intellectual work of universities is still going strong in fact. Discoveries are being made. But the experience of higher education – the accessories, the amenities, the aura – has been commercialized, outsourced, franchised, branded. The professional manager has replaced the professor as the central figure in delivering the goods.

(Twitchell, 2004, p. 116)

Neoliberal community engagement provides a cover for higher education's declining commitment to public values once actively promoted as an alternative to market-driven logics. Little time or resources are left to actually carry out the community mission, whether mainstream or radical. They shift away from organizing to organizational structure (e.g., bureaucratization à la meetings, motions, learning Robert’s Rules) and fundraising for charity (Bodinger de Uriarte & Jacobson, 2013). Community engagement initiatives typically do not challenge the neoliberal bias in favor of market-based solutions to public problems, and encourage academic units to compete for grants from the foundations dominated by the private sector that are seen as the primary venue for resolving community-based inequities (Kliwer, 2013).

Finally, the neoliberal university is one now that features the expansion of institutes and centers that are interdisciplinary and designed to be more autonomous and flexible in their functioning – however defined. Lyotard (1984/2014) foresaw this movement:

The classic dividing lines between the various sciences are thus called into question – disciplines disappear, overlappings occur at the borders of society … The speculative hierarchy of learning gives way to an immanent and, as it were, “flat” network of areas of inquiry … The old “faculties” splinter into institutes and foundations of all kinds and the universities lose their function of speculative legitimation.

(p. 431)

Thus the irony of trying to build the RG and gain support from within an institution whose neoliberal ethic stands in direct opposition to RG’s ultimate goals of social transformation.

The biggest challenge facing the RG is that it is a product of the very environment that creates the conditions the RG hopes to eradicate. From the moment of its conception, campus administrators regarded the RG as an important and worthy endeavor, evident in President Potters’ 2011 convocation address:

[O]ne particularly relevant effort is the Faculty Research Group on Immigrant Workers in Minnesota. Initially sponsored by the College of Social Sciences, this interdisciplinary group is now co-sponsored by the College of Liberal Arts and the School of Public Affairs. Its “Global Goes Local Conference” has become a signature SCSU event that gives stakeholders in Minnesota’s new
immigrant communities an opportunity to present on panels that involve research on issues that shaped their arrival and issues that they face as they struggle to secure substantive citizenship in the United States... The conference and the project from which it stems are excellent examples of trans-disciplinary collaboration across departmental, as well as college/school lines, that we will see more of in coming years. This is the kind of work that not only informs our teaching but has a tremendous impact on our surrounding communities by increasing understanding and awareness of important social issues.
(Office of the President, 2011, para. 24)

Support from the top was crucial in making the RG successful as a group and now a full-fledged research center. However, the future of the center has already faced challenges endemic to its own neoliberal origins and conditions. To succeed, it must raise money within and outside the institution. To raise money, the RG must measure and demonstrate outcomes based on student learning, faculty professional output, and other neoliberally defined goals.

At every stage in the RG's brief existence, university administrators have stressed the importance of the RG's capacity to self-finance should it wish to exist for the long term. In this regard, the RG would become almost entirely autonomous and responsible for its own output but still need to meet the institutional measures for student learning and faculty publishing. And all of this has to be done within the context of increasing statewide budget cuts to the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System.

The consequence for the RG's community engagement mission is that it creates boundaries that otherwise might not exist. For example, the director of the RG starts off every new fiscal year with a budget of roughly $5000. The conference hosted each year costs between $8000 and $10,000. The director, then, must be a part- or full-time fundraiser in addition to colloquium convener, conference organizer, and professor who teaches three to four classes per semester. Hence, the challenge. For the RG to function as a research group on immigrant workers in a community-engaged fashion, it needs to collaborate in a way that demonstrates solidarity with immigrant workers. When fundraising, invariably one must find stakeholders in immigrant issues who would be interested in donating to a research group or future research center. Suffice it to say, outside of support that can be (and is) found from other college units on campus, stakeholders are typically local and statewide businesses and banks.

In addition to finding the time to be a fundraiser, a director (or RG member, for that matter) needs to develop a “pitch” to attract those potential funders. Almost every business or bank (known to back more liberal causes) approached for support is immediately attracted to the RG and its community engagement component. However, they will also ask, “How does support of the RG benefit our [business/bank]?” Responding that it improves their public image will not suffice as a persuasive motivator. In order to win over such “stakeholders,” you need to explain the work of the RG in terms of “deliverables,” such as how many immigrants will be trained in how to open a bank account, develop financial
literacy, or learn new labor market skills. There are two ways that this limits the RG’s ability to meet the scope of its community engagement mission: (1) it limits the kinds of support for immigrant workers to those that don’t directly challenge the interests of employers and lenders in the region, and/or (2) it (potentially) limits the kinds of research questions the RG can ask or emphasize.

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**Subverting Neoliberal Community Engagement?**

Does the neoliberal university need to be such a sticky problem given the RG’s mission? Arguably, it does not have to be if we could ignore the conflicts of interest that exist between immigrant workers (documented and undocumented) who want to organize and their employers who try to fight them. Essentially, this would translate into accepting and surrendering to a neoliberal logic that supports collaborations between university-based initiatives as long as they do not generate organized disruption of core capitalist institutions, including their own.

As a director of the RG, one of the most troublesome compliments I have received relates to my entrepreneurship. I do not necessarily see something wrong with being an entrepreneur or being entrepreneurial. After all, the notion, narrowly understood, refers to one’s initiative and ability to execute projects in a creative and productive fashion. That spirit is shared by CEOs and union organizers, corporate investors and serious political activists. However, without the need to seek funding from businesses, banks, and foundations (who look at issues of immigration through the lens of business needs and market demands), the RG could potentially put its research skills to greater use in more creative and liberating ways. Unfortunately, like all university-related entities, the RG must navigate “budgetary uncertainty,” the defining characteristic of the contemporary neoliberal university. This institutional reality requires the RG, should it aspire to become a full-fledged self-supporting Research Center, to aggressively seek external funding, and thereby it needs to be cautious about collaborations with organizations that, for example, organize immigrant workers against local and national corporations.

Going forward, it is quite possible that the most effective way to carry out the goals of community engagement are not necessarily through an on-campus institution such as the RG at all. The RG, to its credit, can likely continue to function through the efforts of current and future participating members – even with a small budget. However, the neoliberal university does not foster the space to develop this organization in a way that rewards long-term support for developing immigrant workers’ organizational capacities and issues. The location for that work needs to be off the campus, where the cultural basis for developing immigrant workers’ consciousness can be developed without the constraints of neoliberal academic practices: program assessments, professional accomplishments, and student learning outcomes.
With that in mind, I collaborated with community and labor activists to found the St. Cloud–based Greater Minnesota Worker Center (GMWC). Like other worker centers, the GMWC trains immigrant workers how to collectively self-organize when faced with violations of rights and/or seeking to improve their work conditions (Brakke, 2014; Froemke, 2013). This project was consciously developed as an off-campus initiative. Although it would deal with fiscal constraints similar to those faced by other community organizations that search for foundation dollars, nevertheless, its potential for developing community engagement with immigrant workers, in a fashion that challenges the parameters and ideology of neoliberalism, exceeds that of the university-bound RG.

Some might see potential for subverting neoliberalism via the RG. However, to accomplish that task would require a revamping of university-supported community engagement such that it was not ensconced in and restricted by neoliberal ideology and its institutional supports. At the moment, this is a project that will require resistance not only to the neoliberal content of community engagement on university campuses, but to the very neoliberal university system itself.

References


Farrell, C. (2012). Keynote address. SCSU Winter Institute, St. Cloud, MN.


**Notes**

1. "Silent raids" refer to a phenomenon that has emerged most prominently during the Obama administration. Instead of the flashier and directly violent raids and mass arrests, detentions, and subsequent deportations of undocumented immigrant workers led by agents of the Immigration and Naturalization Service seen during the Bush administration, during the Obama administration the preferred approach has been to send out mass letters to undocumented workers demanding that they report to the local Immigration and Customs Enforcement office and present their Social Security cards (some of which had been found to belong to other persons). The net effect is the same as a military-style raid; undocumented workers quit en masse and move away from the area to avoid deportation.

2. Indeed, certain immigrant groups who find themselves more likely to be located in professional “white collar” positions rarely regard themselves as having much in common with more traditional working-class immigrants.

3. I made note of this in my speech when I accepted my award as finalist in the National Campus Compact Thomas Erlich Award at the 2013 AA&CU Convention in Atlanta (archived at www.youtube.com/watch?v=snEyT-QJtrQ). Reviewing a draft of a white paper report on civic engagement, I noted that of the institutions that were reached out to as key stakeholders in the community for civic engagement projects, unions and worker centers were noticeably absent. Corporations, banks,
small businesses, chambers of commerce, and private foundations were the focus of civic engagement collaborations throughout the report.

4 While the position originally allotted the director two course releases, due to budget crises, it was changed to one course release per year. After three years, the position was again allotted two course releases. However, as SCSU enters new rounds of budget crises, there is no guarantee of two or even one course release.

5 The Greater Minnesota Worker Center Facebook Page can be found at www.facebook.com/greaternworkercenter?ref=br_tf.