

## The Timid University

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### 1. What are the barriers to universities being resources for democracy?

- larger cultural drive toward privatization of higher education, leading to emphasis on workforce development/vocationalism, competitiveness, P&T standards, resource allocation decisions, associated with pitting STEM against LA disciplines
- nature of knowledge is narrow and atomized, not integrated with public issues, public life (the tyranny of the specialized disciplines)
- funding sources work against rewarding public activism (esp. for tuition-driven institutions, where dollars are directly tied to trad. forms of instruction)
- increase in use of adjunct faculty (and their need to generate direct revenue) → less time for public activity
- aversion to active leadership and to big ideas (by faculty)
- perceived fear of reactions to activism on the part of general public, trustees, legislators
- aversion to disturbance, preference for the status quo, esp. on part of senior leadership
- lack of shared physical space on some campuses, less face-to-face time for civic work
- lack of skills to do civic work, advocacy
- hierarchical power structures
- lack of attention to these concerns within PhD programs

### 2. How does academic work constrain democratic activity?

- sustaining traditional pedagogies that emphasize expert knowledge, passive transmission of knowledge
- academic calendar/atomization of curriculum work against public engagement/sustained community commitments; calendar also separates faculty from staff, who work year-round
- existing reward systems
- lack of articulation within disciplines about the public nature of the discipline—how it connects to public life (including in PhD programs)
- we think about academic work as a “job” rather than a set of responsibilities to ourselves, the institution, the community

### 3. How have some universities overcome barriers?

- creating campus-based institutes for grad. students and faculty on public engagement
- reform of P&T standards to recognize value of engagement (reframing “service”)
- structural and mission integration of academic and student affairs

- creation of institutes on campus to examine and teach public forms of leadership
- pursuit of Carnegie Classification as an engaged campus
- use of residential settings/living & learning communities focused on public engagement
- intentional coalition politics, building alliances with key leaders, co-opting leaders into the conversation
- “binge” writing centers for students and faculty to come together to write about these issues in an intensive manner

*Liz's summary:*

Where do our values come from? Our own educational experiences and the values associated with those experiences

What language do we use? Do we describe this work as an add-on or as integral to academic work? Do we end up ghettoizing the work (e.g., in special dorms, special centers, service learning programs, etc.)? Danger of separating deep intellectual work of the academy from public, engaged commitments

Leadership about/for change must be grounded in those things we care passionately about. The analysis should not leave out this reality, the need to deal with unpleasant, very difficult challenges—hanging in over time.

You will get as much grief for doing something moderate, insipid, timid as doing those things that are radical, challenging.

Necessity of shifting from management to leadership

We are very poor at reflecting on the structures that affect our lives. E.g., P&T. The biggest problem is what it does to the first 7 years of the young academic's life, setting the tone, values of one's work for the long term.

No framework within a university where the *total* experience of the university is considered. The balkanized student experience. The parts drive the whole rather than vice versa.

Must be greater attention to the senior year. This is the defining year for the student's educational experience, not only the first year. How does the senior year reflect the cross-disciplinary, integrated, developmental aspects of first-year experiences?

Citizenship is unbounded. Must approach it in a comprehensive, big-idea manner.