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## KEYNOTE ADDRESS

# Enacting Our Field

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*This keynote address examines the pedagogical challenges facing the field of nonprofit management in American higher education. It interrogates four binary distinctions that are commonly used in scholarship and teaching about the social sector but that now show signs of eroding: for-profit versus nonprofit, funder versus grantee, local versus global, and secular versus faith based. Each distinction is examined with the aim of answering two questions: What are the implications for new theorizing about this field? What are the implications for teaching and action? In closing, the article explores innovations in structuring social sector management programs to educate cross-sector leaders capable of addressing critical societal problems.*

**Keywords:** *civil society, nonprofit management education, philanthropy, NGO, social enterprise*

I AM GRATEFUL TO the Nonprofit Academic Centers Council for the invitation to deliver this opening address on a topic that is close to my heart. The BenchMark 3.5 conference presents us with an opportunity to examine our field of nonprofit management education and philanthropy and to ask both how it has grown and where we wish it to go. In preparing for this address, I looked through a number of the writings that emerged from the previous three BenchMark conferences in 2006, 1996, and 1986 (see

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Ashcraft, 2007; O'Neill and Fletcher, 1998; O'Neill and Young, 1988). When reading this material, it was inspiring to see the vision and insight with which the field has been built. And it was humbling to see that the challenges we face as a field are persistent and enduring.

I begin with a few introductory observations about our field and why we are here. I then examine how we characterize our field, especially the language and concepts we employ in describing it. We commonly use a series of binary distinctions in teaching about our field that I believe no longer hold, and we thus need to evolve our language and ways of theorizing about the sector to reflect changing realities. Third, I would like to explore the question of how we are structured as a field. I am referring to our institutional homes, including schools of public policy, public affairs, public administration, social work and social policy, business and management, and independent nonprofit academic centers. Is this the right set of institutional actors and arrangements? How do we know?

Before jumping into the substance of my talk, I will start on a light note with a pop quiz. What do you think are the chances of success of the following endeavors? (a) A tech startup company in Silicon Valley making a substantial return for its investors. (b) A skateboarder learning a new trick. (c) A nonprofit organization solving a pressing societal problem such as poverty or health care. Your options are 100 percent, 15 percent, or 2 percent, and you must match a different number to each endeavor. I will return to this quiz in a few minutes, and I assure you that it has something to do with nonprofit management education!

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## The Field of Nonprofit Management Education and Philanthropy

We know that our sector is a sizable and significant player in the economic and social life of the United States. For instance, the U.S. nonprofit sector is a \$2 trillion industry annually, with more than 1.5 million registered organizations (up 40 to 50 percent over the past decade). This figure is taken from 2008 data, largely pre-financial crisis. We also know that there are more than 75,000 nonprofit foundations in this country (up 61 percent in the past decade). Finally, 27 percent of adults volunteered through an organization in 2009; if you'd like to put a dollar value on that, it's about \$280 billion (Wing, Roeger, and Pollak, 2010, pp. 2, 6). These are just the numbers in the United States.

What about programs for educating nonprofit leaders? From the data gathered by Mirabella (2011) to be presented at this conference, we know that 325 colleges and universities offer courses in nonprofit management and philanthropy; 239 of these offer graduate-level

courses, and 168 offer graduate degrees with a concentration in nonprofit management, consisting of at least three courses; 136 schools offer undergraduate credit courses. More generally, while the number of institutions offering nonprofit curricula has stabilized, the number of undergraduate, graduate, professional development, and executive education programs continues to rise.

In the United Kingdom and in parts of the developing world, we have also seen a growth in nongovernmental organization (NGO) management programs. These offerings are typically a part of development studies or international development programs focused on the challenges of fighting poverty, with less of an explicit managerial orientation than those in the United States.

But I don't think that most of us are here at BenchMark because of these numbers. They describe our sector in aggregate, but they do not motivate us or drive us. I expect many of us are here because we believe intrinsically in the value of the social sector, that it has something to offer to our personal lives, our communities, and our societies. We're here because we see the sector as an agent of change or as a vehicle for our agency.

We're here in particular as educators. So before going any further, I ask each of you to take a moment and think of the students, current or former, who have made you most proud and whom you've had a hand in influencing. Close your eyes for a moment, conjure up their faces, their names, what they brought to the classroom, what they took with them when they left, what aspirations you have for them. Think about this question: *What do I do, as an educator, to make a difference in their lives, so that they can make a difference in the lives of others?* This is why we're here. I believe our most important question over the next two days of this conference is, *How can we prepare the next generation of students to make a difference in the world?*

## Characterizing Our Field

How do we characterize our field through our teaching? I believe we often speak and teach about it in terms of a series of binary distinctions that now show signs of eroding:

1. For-profit versus nonprofit, and government versus nongovernment
2. Funder versus grantee
3. Local versus global, developed versus underdeveloped, and North versus South
4. Secular versus faith based

I'll spend a few minutes on each binary distinction with two purposeful questions in mind. First, what is changing that's important to grasp for *theorizing* about our field? And second, what is changing

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that's important for *action* in our field? Teaching sits at the nexus of theory and action: through teaching, we give our students a basis for analysis (via theory) that can then enable action. Through our teaching, we actively constitute and enact our field. Let me elaborate by turning to the first set of binary divides.

### For-profit Versus Nonprofit and Government Versus Nongovernment

My colleague Adil Najam, who is vice chancellor of the Lahore University of Management Sciences in Pakistan and also serves on the faculty of Boston University, has observed that the nomenclature we use to describe the sector tells us something about the dominant institutional paradigm in our society. He notes, "It is probably more than coincidental that the term nonprofit tends to be popular in capitalist industrialized countries (especially the United States) where market institutions are the dominant organizational actors, whereas in many developing countries and in international forums (such as the United Nations) where government agencies are more dominant, nongovernment tends to be the favored modifier" (Najam, 1996, p. 208). It is not new that our definitions and terms are oppositional or negative, and this concern is not simply about nomenclature. In the act of naming something, we vest in it a relationship of power. So we lead ourselves to believe that nonprofit organizations (NPOs) respond to market failure, and NGOs respond to government failure, and they must always prove their worth in relationship to these other primary actors.

There have been efforts to break out of this binary nomenclature and to develop more positive language, as suggested by several terms: *civil society*, *independent sector*, or *social enterprise*. *Civil society* is a term much more widely used globally than it is in the United States, and it is far more associated with social change and social action than it is with management. It is also a more political term. The Italian political theorist Antonio Gramsci characterized civil society as an "arena" of interaction or a "sphere" of debate, a space in which actors of various sectors and persuasions could hammer out or engage their differences. It is a democratic political space; it is what makes a society civil. An implication of this language for theory building is that we need to study not only NPOs, but how actors in society interact, compete, collaborate, or exercise influence around issues of societal concern. An implication for action is that we need to teach students how to act for social change through all sectors, and particularly at the intersection of sectors. This is somehow lost when we speak of NPOs or NGOs, or even of organizations.

Another term, *independent sector*, is also inherently political. We don't use it much, despite the fact that a key U.S. advocacy

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umbrella group is named as such. I spoke about this term with another colleague, Peter Spink, at the Fundação Getulio Vargas in Brazil, one of the country's most prominent business schools. He described two broad categories of civil society actors in Brazil. The first is civil society organizations (CSOs), which tend to be activist, rights-based social movements, such as those working on black and indigenous rights. The second is service providers or third-sector organizations that are linked to philanthropic organizations, many of which work with children and education. It is this first group, he said, that "is vital to maintaining a vibrant democracy; the second group is more focused on implementing their respective projects than on broader questions of promoting democracy." A key characteristic of this first group of civil society organizations is independence from business and from governments interested in supporting them. "We have an active civil society but not an independent one," Spink says. One has to understand his remarks within the context of Brazil, where after many years of dictatorship, activist CSOs were absorbed into government in the late 1980s. This is also true for India after independence and South Africa after apartheid. Because of this long-standing mistrust of government, maintaining independence is key to civil society.

The other notable shift in language surrounds *social enterprise*, a term that has generally been less explicitly political, focusing instead on the adaptation of business approaches to addressing social problems. There is considerable excitement around this term, especially in business schools. Cynics have suggested that its catchiness in the United States may be related to our preference for the heroic individual, the entrepreneur who persists against all odds and manages to unleash the power of markets for social good. But I believe there's something far more fundamental and inspiring at play here. Two weeks ago, the students at Harvard Business School and Harvard Kennedy School organized their twelfth annual Social Enterprise Conference. It sold out 1,500 tickets in advance, making it five times larger than this event of ours, and about triple the size of the annual conference of the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA). In 2009 Forbes .com called it one of the "top twelve most influential and exclusive executive gatherings" (Kneale, 2009). But what is most striking about the event is the energy, the commitment, the drive to make a difference. These students are not thinking about sectors, whether nonprofit, public, or private. They are thinking about societal problems and how to solve them. Most of them will move across and between sectors many times during their professional lives. They are ahead of faculty on this, and they are pushing us to think not only cross-sectorally but to be problem focused and system focused, not sector focused.

This discussion raises the important question of how we define our field, for in that definition we create our possibilities for action.

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This is not a new debate, but an enduring one. Michael O'Neill, in his keynote address at BenchMark 3.0 five years ago, observed that the field of nonprofit management education is now established and is here to stay (O'Neill, 2007). But he argued against nonprofit management programs becoming established in any one type of professional school (such as public policy or business), suggesting that it is desirable to have programs in diverse rather than standardized settings. Lester Salamon, in comments at BenchMark 2.0 in 1996, argued that our central challenge is not necessarily to improve general nonprofit management but "rather, the central challenge confronting efforts to solve public problems is the challenge of learning how to manage the complex collaborative relationships among the sectors that now form the heart of public problem-solving in virtually every sphere, both in the United States and, increasingly, around the world" (Salamon, 1998, p. 138). He went on to express concern that the establishment of separate programs of nonprofit management "may have moved us in the opposite direction" of public problem solving "by splitting the training of nonprofit managers off from the training of the public managers with whom they will increasingly interact" (Salamon, 1998, p. 143).

Fifteen years later, the challenge remains with us, but with two further layers of complexity. Business and for-profit approaches to social change have entered the mix as viable models, and it is our students who are leading the way with their energy and passion, while we as a field lag in remaining relevant to them.

### **Funders Versus Grantees, Donors Versus Recipients, and Patrons Versus Beneficiaries**

This second set of binary distinctions permeates most discussions about our field. Relationships of power place funders in a position of authority, for in the act of giving money (via private philanthropy, foundations, or government), one acquires the right to demand that one's money is well spent, or at least spent in a way that the funder values. The scholars Peter Frumkin (2010) and Peter Dobkin Hall (2004) have suggested that funders don't always seek evidence of results but sometimes give for expressive reasons that are close to their hearts, regardless of ultimate outcomes. A common complaint by nonprofit leaders is that if the organization can demonstrate success, then the funder will be happy to take credit for supporting good work. But if the nonprofit fails, the funder will shoulder no blame.

Herein lie the answers to our pop quiz: What are the chances of success of a nonprofit organization solving a pressing societal problem? Based on an admittedly unscientific perusal of the annual reports of various grant makers, it would appear to be 100 percent. The annual reports of foundations and other funders are replete with

narratives of the successes they have supported. This is not to suggest that the actual success rate is 100 percent, only that everything is reported to look like success. Now compare this expectation to venture capital (VC) investments in technology startups. A VC firm that makes ten investments will typically expect only one or two of them to do well, with the rest performing at a mediocre level or failing outright. That's a 15 percent success rate. What's wrong with this picture? Even skateboarders learning new maneuvers expect only a 2 percent success rate.<sup>1</sup>

More seriously, what are the implications of our current understanding of funder–grantee relations? Our understanding of these relationships is informed by well-developed bodies of theory. Resource dependence theory has taught us to pay attention to interorganizational relationships of power. We know that organizations create interdependence in order to manage uncertainties and to smooth out relationships with funders. Institutional theory reminds us that nonprofits act in ways to gain legitimacy and that the process of reporting performance to funders may be part ritual or ceremony in order to secure necessary resources rather than an act of assessing whether we are making progress in resolving a pressing social problem. The practical implication of such a view of grantee–funder relationships is grave: while funds may continue to flow, it is an organization's mission that suffers as it becomes subservient to relations of resource dependence or to societal expectations and norms. We need new ways of theorizing about this problem, of framing the relationships, so that we might uncover new avenues for action.

In my interactions with business school colleagues about this problem, two insights have remained with me: the notion of capital markets and perceptions about risk.<sup>2</sup> A startup firm in the private sector may initially receive support from individuals and family, followed by angel investors and VC firms that will help it reach a certain stage of growth. VCs are highly intrusive, taking a seat on the board and often being quite directive about critical management decisions such as recruitment in exchange for an equity investment in the firm. There are different stages of financing, including a role for commercial banks and private equity; in some instances, there is a public offering. The key point is that there are stages of growth that are supported by the capital markets. The support is not just financial but includes management capacity building. A VC firm will help build a management team and a business plan, and it will hold the organization's feet to the fire because its money and time are at stake.

Regarding the notion of risk, funders and grantees in the nonprofit sector tend to be risk averse. Funders claim to support innovation, but innovation requires risk taking and expectation of failure. Few grant-making foundations are willing to risk failure. As noted, VC firms in contrast expect most of their investments to fare poorly, with only

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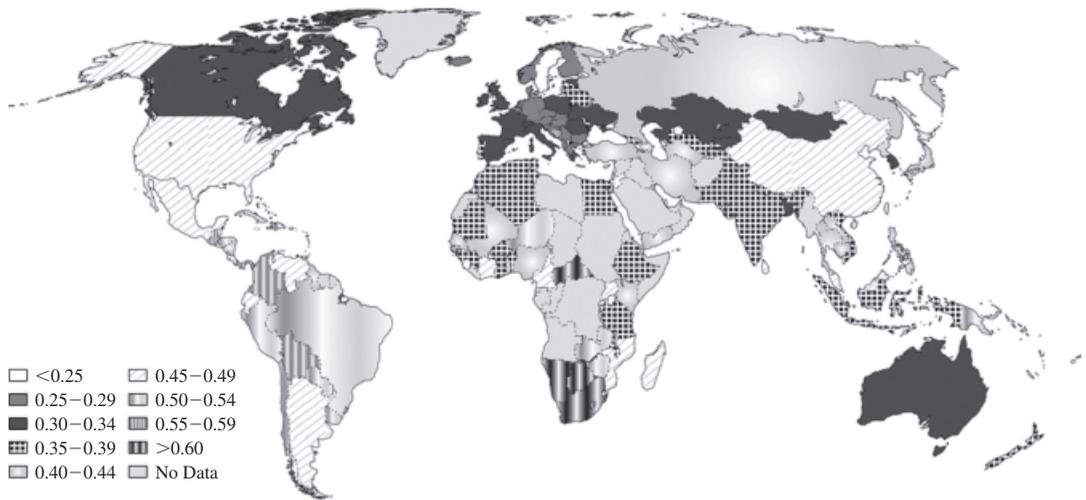
one or two performing well. One may hope to invest in the next Google or Facebook to compensate for all the failures along the way. It is ironic that such a tolerance for failure is common in the for-profit sector, with its drive for profits and fairly clear metrics of performance, as compared to the social sector in which there is much less clarity about what constitutes success, or how to measure and reward it. And yet there is far less willingness among social sector organizations to take risks or even talk about failure. Shouldn't we be expecting 99 percent failure rather than 100 percent success?

Thankfully, change is afoot. There is the beginning of a conversation about failure, particularly in the international development community. Engineers Without Borders Canada recently launched a website on which development practitioners post stories about failure.<sup>3</sup> The new breed of nonprofit impact investors, including Acumen Fund, New Profit, Robin Hood Foundation, and Grassroots Business Fund, are breaking the mold by showing that investing in management capacity building in the social sector is critical to helping organizations achieve better performance and greater social impacts. One need not adopt the notion of capital markets wholesale to the social sector, but it makes sense to build different stages of support so that a funder or investor that helps a startup grow to \$5 million in revenue is different from one that knows how to scale it to a \$50 million organization. Unfortunately, while many foundations and government agencies previously supported nonprofit capacity building, many now prefer to support program costs rather than operating or overhead costs. And many nonprofits are complicit in undermining their own capacity building.

The challenges before us, as educators, are many. We need to teach our students to think about results and performance more deeply, and we need more systematic ways of measuring and analyzing social performance in ways that nonprofit leaders can use. There has been much work in this area this already, especially on outcomes measurement. But the U.S. nonprofit sector lags behind advances made in international development, where the basic logic model has been in use since the late 1960s, and has come under considerable criticism. A plethora of additional methods for gathering data, measuring performance, and developing theories of change—such as participatory rural appraisal, outcome mapping, most significant change, and constituency voice, to name just a few (Ebrahim and Rangan, 2010)—have emerged in the past two to three decades.

The broader point is that our binary characterizations of the funder–grantee, donor–recipient relationship are inadequate for teaching about how to solve social problems. Conceptually, we need ways of thinking about the funding environment that help us see systemwide dynamics and solutions. In terms of action, we need to teach not only about fund-raising and grant writing (important skills no doubt), but also ways to reshape the capital markets that are presently impeding real change.

Figure 1. Gini Coefficients



Source: Adapted from *World Factbook 2009* (Central Intelligence Agency, 2008).

### Local Versus Global, Developed Versus Underdeveloped, North Versus South

Turning to the third set of binary distinctions, I'm struck by the fact that much of our curriculum is U.S.-specific, with separate courses on NGO management. We are beginning to see increasing crossover, but we have not been sufficiently deliberate about learning from the experiences of the nonprofit or nongovernment sectors in other parts of the world. One doesn't have to go far to see the similarities between the prosperous regions of the "global North" and the poorer regions of the "global South." My first visit to Washington, D.C., was after my first visit to New Delhi in the early 1990s. The similarities will be apparent to anyone who has visited both cities, or for that matter other global capitals: broad beautiful boulevards, majestic buildings, well-maintained roads,—and literally a block or two away, abject poverty where more than 70 percent of the city's population resides. In terms of distribution of income, or income inequality as measured by the Gini coefficient, we see that income inequality in the United States is similar to that in Mexico and China, worse than India, and much worse than Canada, Australia, or parts of western Europe (see Figure 1).

In Washington, D.C., alone, from the 1980s to the early 2000s, income for the poorest residents rose just 3 percent, while average incomes for the wealthiest jumped 81 percent—essentially reflecting two economies (Lazere, 2007, p. 3). In other words, you have

both the global North and the global South in the same city, just blocks apart. And the global financial crisis is making that gap wider across the United States. A recent U.S. Census Bureau report found that the poverty rate in 2010 was at its highest level in nearly two decades (15.1 percent), and that 46.2 million people live in poverty in the United States—the largest number in the fifty-two years since poverty data have been published (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, and Smith, 2011).

What does this mean for education and action in civil society? For a poignant example, I turn to the work of John Gaventa, a scholar and practitioner of international development, who many years ago worked at the Highlander Center in Tennessee on economic and social justice issues. While at Highlander, Gaventa worked with people who had lost their jobs in Appalachia when factories moved south to the *maquiladoras* in Mexico. He took a group to Mexico to meet the women who had gained those jobs. He wrote:

The women workers [from Appalachia] were struck by the parallels they found in the rapidly industrializing parts of Mexico. At the same time, they were shocked by the working and living conditions they saw, conditions promoted by a U.S. corporation and government to which they felt some loyalty. The learning led to new types of action. The U.S. workers, who themselves were primarily unemployed or worked in low-wage jobs, pledged to raise money for a van to be used for a new organization of women workers in Mexico. But more importantly, they began to take action in their own country on government policies that they came to see as part of the reason for their job loss, traveling throughout the state testifying on jobs on trade issues. . . .” (Gaventa, 2002)

These events occurred about fifteen years ago. More recently, Goldman Sachs noted that the four biggest middle-income countries—Brazil, Russia, India, and China—are expected to account for a third of the global economy by 2020, making up almost half of the world’s gross domestic product (GDP) growth (Wilson, Kelston, and Ahmed, 2010).

My point here is unsurprising: the worlds of the wealthy North and the poor South are closely connected. The poor in Washington have a lot in common with the poor in New Delhi, as do the rich in either place. And because the problems of poverty we’re fighting are global, the solutions will also have to be global. The implications for nonprofit education, and for modes of action, are far reaching. For example, the United States lags behind many other countries in exploring new ways of engaging civil society leaders on matters of public policy. A series of recent studies on “Building Responsive States” documents efforts around the world, including in South

Africa, Mexico, Chile, India, Turkey, Morocco, and Brazil, where citizen groups have affected national-level policy change and in some cases established structured frameworks whereby civil society actors can directly engage with policymakers and implementers (Cornwall and Coelho, 2007; Gaventa, 2008). Another project examines what it takes to build the political will for more participatory forms of policy governance, drawing on the experiences of nonprofit and government practitioners from places as diverse as Canada, East Africa, Tajikistan, the United Kingdom, and the Philippines (Malena, 2009). My work with scholars in six countries—in some of the poorest countries of the world, such as Bolivia, Uganda, and Bangladesh, as well as in regional powerhouses such as Brazil, India, and South Africa—finds that there have been innovations in opening political space for national-level dialogues on poverty priorities. There is much to be learned and taught from these experiences in the global South that is relevant to the North. The units of analysis are not only nonprofits and NGOs, but social systems, policy spaces, and capital markets.

### Secular Versus Faith-Based

Finally, and only briefly, I turn to the fourth binary distinction. In much of our curriculum and programs, we tend to avoid talking not only about faith-based organizations, but also about faith as a motivating force for engaging in the social sector. There are exceptions, of course, but they are not the mainstream in how we constitute our curricula. We know that there are many organizations driven by or inspired by faith, including Habitat for Humanity, Catholic Charities, World Vision, Alcoholics Anonymous, to name just a few of the well-known ones. Many universities have their roots in religious institutions, such as Harvard, Yale, Georgetown, and Al Azhar in Cairo. We also know that a huge proportion of individual giving in the United States—more than 40 percent of individual donations—is channeled through religious congregations. Historically, communities of faith have been critical to the greatest social movements of our times, including civil rights in the United States and liberation theology in Latin America, and perhaps even the Arab spring.

Even more crucial in a post-9/11 world, the current fear of Islam is based partly on ignorance and on a lack of curricular content on the central role of equality, democratic practice, social justice, and social organizing in Muslim communities. I speak myself as a Muslim who has been reluctant to bring faith into my professional life. But the principles of Islam that I was raised on—service toward others, compassion, equality, and social justice—are common motivating forces for civil society. We know that many leaders in the social sector, and many of our students, seek strength in their faith. For the most part, we haven't found a way of building this into our curricula

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on leadership. This past January, I participated on a team with five other faculty members from across Harvard in a four-day workshop on “Faith and Leadership in a Fragmented World,” which drew upon religious texts from Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism to examine lessons for leadership and community organizing. The demand from students exceeded our capacity. And I anticipate that there is a craving for this kind of conversation among our students, among leaders in the sector, and perhaps even among faculty.

In summary so far, I believe the binary distinctions that characterize much of our discourse about our field—for-profit versus nonprofit, government versus nongovernment, funder versus grantee, North versus South, secular versus faith based, and so on—are being erased. These distinctions are being challenged by our students, who don’t necessarily think in these terms and are more interested in how to solve societal problems. And they’re being challenged by the realities of our world.

## Structure of the Field

What are the implications of this changing world for how we organize our field? Is the current structure in nonprofit and philanthropic management programs adequate for preparing leaders to address critical societal problems? At the risk of offering a reductionist view and making gross overgeneralizations, the training of public and nonprofit managers might be sorted into three crude categories. First, schools of government and public policy tend to be adept at training students in policy analysis, with some understanding of the practical challenges incurred in policy formulation and implementation. It is not necessarily their mandate to train people in the day-to-day skills of managing organizations. Second, nonprofit and public managers who receive their training in business schools emerge with strong management competencies but tend to view the firm, or organization, as the central unit of analysis. This sets them up to see other organizations as competitors, rather than as collaborators whose experiences and resources might be harnessed toward solving shared societal problems. And it doesn’t prepare them to see societal challenges as systemic ones rather than organizational ones. I have less of a basis for reflecting on the training offered through the many nonprofit studies programs based in academic centers across the country. There’s considerable diversity in the ways such programs are constituted, but I’m reminded of Lester Salamon’s concern, noted previously, of whether we might be creating new borders rather than training people to be cross-border managers.

To be fair, regardless of the institutional model, there’s been an increase in the number of boundary-spanning courses offered in nonprofit management education programs. We’ve seen a rise in courses about collaboration. An early example was Melissa Stone’s

“Managing Collaborations” at the University of Minnesota’s Humphrey Institute. Ten years ago, I developed a course called “Collaborative Governance and Civil Society” at Virginia Tech as part of a graduate program in public and international affairs. More generally, although *teaching* about cross-sector collaboration has become a recognized need, we need to develop opportunities to *practice* cross-border management and leadership. It may be unreasonable to expect students in our programs to become adept managers, policy analysts, fund-raisers, team builders, as well as content experts in education or health care or environment. But we have a unique resource at our doorstep that is a microcosm of all of these components operating in silos: the university. In my course on nonprofit leadership, I invite cross-registrants from other professional schools in order to create teams with diverse backgrounds and complementary skills. Two-thirds of the class is comprised of business school students (who are themselves increasingly diverse), and one-third of cross-registrants from schools of education, public health, medicine, law, public policy, and divinity. Central to the course are client-based projects carried out by students in teams of three or four. Thus a project involving the design of a fund-raising strategy for an education-based nonprofit will be carried out by a team with complementary expertise in both business and education. This approach to designing courses and field projects—around teams with diverse training, skills, and worldviews—is not new, but its implementation remains rare across university campuses. The pedagogical challenge is not about imparting all of these competencies to students in our programs, but to get them working in collaborative teams as early and as often as possible.

Some alternative models also have emerged. One is an “integration” model proposed by Steven Rathgeb Smith of Georgetown University (see Smith’s plenary address in this issue) that integrates social sector content into required courses in schools of public policy and public affairs. This approach may be well suited to our new world in which people work across sectors rather than see their future in a single sector. A less structured model is used at Stanford University, where students are given considerable flexibility to assemble their own curricula from offerings across the university. This approach requires students rather than faculty to be entrepreneurial, and is possible only when professional schools encourage cross-registration. Another model involves the design of schools of “management in society.” This may be the most ambitious approach, and it is possible if one is building a new school from scratch, particularly in the global South. This innovation is being explored by the Aga Khan Development Network, which is designing a management school specifically targeted toward the economic and social development challenges of Africa and Asia. Educational institutions have a unique potential to focus on cross-boundary social problems by bringing together core business skills (finance and accounting,

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organizational behavior, operations management, human capital, marketing, and so on) with public sector management skills (policy analysis, legislative process and lobbying, public narrative, decision making to include equity and fairness considerations) with the value-driven, participatory ethos that is the hallmark of the social sector (community organizing, social entrepreneurship, and movement building). Where will such graduates work? In business, government, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, and hybrids. The sector isn't the crucial concern, because these alumni will be boundary spanners their entire lives.

## Conclusion

I began by asking you to close your eyes and to think about those students whom you've inspired and who in turn have inspired you. So I leave the last word to my students in my graduate course that has a mix from business, public policy, education, public health, medicine, law, and divinity. I solicited feedback from my students in a mid-course assessment very recently, and here's what they had to say about having one another in the same room. These are just a couple of excerpts; I share the whole set of feedback (positive and negative) with the students.

Comments about what they liked included:

- “Students from other schools force MBAs to begin to grapple with the realities of life ‘outside the bubble’”
- “Cohesion in class despite mix of schools”
- “The varied backgrounds and areas of study in the class have greatly added to my understanding of the cases”
- “Has served to illustrate the complexity of the issues and also the wealth of resources a group can potentially apply to them”
- “Most enjoyable aspect of the course is [the client-based] project”
- “Working with students from different schools on an actual problem is a fantastic opportunity to put course material to use in a relevant way”

Feedback about what could be improved included:

- “At times it is hard to anticipate the direction that the conversation will take—makes it difficult for me to time and plan my contributions”
- “Sometimes business school students take over the conversation [with] their consulting hats [and] we lose some perspective on the actual nature of the projects we are analyzing; might be helpful if [the professor] continued to provoke responses by asking ‘How do you all feel about that?’”

Such a classroom is filled with ambiguity, uncertainty, and discomfort. That is what you get with diverse worldviews and experience. You also have entrepreneurial energy, a drive to make a difference, and a feeling of immense opportunity. Let me stop here. I thank you for your patience. And let me take my students' advice and ask you, "How do you all feel about that?"

## Notes

1. For a light take on failure and success in skateboarding, see <http://vimeo.com/19407827>. Retrieved March 24, 2011.
2. See, for example, Kaplan and Grossman (2010); note that they employ the term *social capital* quite differently from its more established use in the literature.
3. See <http://www.admittingfailure.com>. Retrieved August 22, 2011.

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