

ISSUES IN INTEGRATIVE STUDIES  
No. 22, pp 141-154 (2004)

# REFLECTIONS ON THE WELLSPRINGS OF INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES AND TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION

The 2004 Association  
for Integrative Studies Conference,  
Keynote Address, October 17, 2004

by

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**Abstract:** To make the case for the importance of interdisciplinary studies, Minnich appeals to its wellsprings. She reflects on how her own field of philosophy encourages questioning of assumptions and methods; on her political concerns for freedom, justice and equality; and on her commitment to a model of education that trusts students to follow questions and issues that really matter to them. In this context she cautions that it is important to question in and across even new interdisciplinary fields such as women's studies, ethnic studies or disability studies. The form and content of her reflections challenge educators to think through their own goals and how to assess whether they have achieved them.

I am so pleased to be here with you; in some ways it feels like coming home, because I share so many of the interests and commitments this association serves. But it also feels like coming upon a public square in which very different people gather to talk and make choices about what really matters to them. And surely both finding ourselves feeling at home and rediscovering the pleasures of a diverse public life are appropriate to our topic now – or mine as I have chosen to define it – the wellsprings of interdisciplinary, integral studies and transformative education.

By “wellsprings,” I mean the needs and gifts of our human being – not just some kinds and capacities of bodies, or of intelligence or learning, and not just some emotional predispositions or expressions of spirit, but, rather, the given that we are, or always anew can become, questions for ourselves, so no particular answers of any era or culture or kind of knowledge can capture once and for all either what or who we are.

I invoke the wellsprings of our shared and of our unique being to talk about interdisciplinarity because I believe it to be most true to itself when it keeps alive the questioning that refuses to settle for any answers arrived at by others. And I believe that such ongoing questioning is necessary to hold education accountable first and foremost to supporting the fullest realization of each unique individual who entrusts her or himself to us as teachers. I do not mean each unique individual in isolation from all others: quite the contrary. We are social beings, creatures and creators of many kinds of languages and of shareable meanings; we find our uniqueness within and as a special interweaving of those shareable meanings. Below any particular interdisciplinary project, then, is that given that we are already, and are always also still becoming, relational, communicative creatures. And this, I think, is why integrative and interdisciplinary thinking are possible as well as desirable.

So I want to keep thinking about interdisciplinarity not just as defined by its breaching or bridging of established fields’ boundaries, not just as we can find it now everywhere from subject-centered lectures into which the professor drops references to other fields, to courses that draw on differing disciplines, to projects that focus on an issue the solution to which requires many resources, to programs threaded around exploration of a concept that has meaning in many fields, to living/learning centers that provide a rich brew of exchanges to whole campuses that are organized not around departmental offices and their classrooms but around spaces for differing groups to gather to investigate pressing concerns. These are all terrific; I haven’t a doubt about that. But if and when they lose contact with the wellsprings that originally make them possible and the questioning that continues to animate and feed

them, they too develop divisions and walls that will themselves soon need to be bridged and breached – as history tells us they too will be.

It is healthy, I think, thus to remember that all the disciplines once emerged from the breaching and bridging of established boundaries, from the explorations of intrepid, passionate people who wanted to ask questions and seek answers that were not already available.

And that, I think, is evidence that it is possible to serve today's interdisciplinary movements in ways that are committed both to creating new programs and courses and projects, and – through all our work – to keeping those wellsprings flowing.

Because we are each unique as well as social beings, we each bring our own more personal locations – our homes of several kinds – and the commitments that call us out into public life to such a discussion. I will therefore make those internal disciplines of mine explicit, and will organize my reflections around them so you can see how, like the external disciplines that define fields, they too may overlap with and differ from your own.

The wellspring of my own passion for interdisciplinarity, integral studies, and transformative education is related to why I initially found an intellectual home in philosophy, a political commitment to the aspirational goal of democracy, and an educational calling to progressive education. My deepest interest is not so much knowledge – disciplinary *or* interdisciplinary – but thinking. Whatever else I am working on, or for, my deeper purpose is to figure out how to recenter education so that it does a much better job at developing, in our students and in ourselves, the free, reflexive, reflective, holistic, responsible, representative thinking without which, I do believe, any other kind of freedom is literally inconceivable.

I have worked across disciplinary boundaries for some forty years now because of this personal, philosophical, political passion for thinking freely as an individual with and among others.

By saying that this passion is philosophical, I mean more than that I found a kind of home in the academic discipline in which I hold the doctorate. I mean that philosophy felt like home because it encouraged the questioning, the thinking, that is a need of my being most of all because it keeps all of life so very interesting.

By saying that it is political, I mean to invoke more than the academic field, and more than electoral politics. I mean the intensely engaging, challenging experiences of public life to which we bring our concerns for the freedom, justice, and equality required to keep us moving toward the aspirational goal we call “democracy.”

And by saying that my animating passion is educational, again I mean more than the field, and more than the purpose of preserving past knowledge by passing it on to rising generations. I mean the enlivening experience that can happen when students and teachers think together openly and freely about questions and issues and commitments and subjects that really matter to them, and that therefore renew rather than just preserve what we have from the past.

That I want always thus to go below and around the most familiar definitions of these and all disciplines does not mean I do not value them.

My “training” in the academic discipline of philosophy was wonderful: I enjoyed every agonizing minute of it. Like the years I studied dance, in studying the field of philosophy, I was challenged (whether or not I succeeded) to become stronger and more flexible, as well as to comprehend the magnificent thought-creations of many other people. So, yes, I do think studying the discipline of philosophy is good, as is studying in the other disciplines, each in its own way.

But it is not the subject matter (substantive or methodological) of the academic field of philosophy that interests me most. It is that this field has to do with thinking, with raising and pursuing questions wherever they may lead, including through the territories staked out as “theirs” by other scholars – including other philosophers. That is, I find in this discipline a closeness to the wellspring of our being as thinking, boundary-crossing and meaning-making creatures, and I love that (and so also despair when, as a professionalized field, it forgets to tend those wellsprings.)

That relation to my own discipline has made it hard for me to assume that it or any other field is most truly, importantly, or even adequately defined by its claimed subject matter and methods, and exists only within the walls of that definition. And this means that I have not been drawn to the most obvious kind of interdisciplinary studies, the kind that reminds me of intellectual tourism – if it’s Tuesday, this must be psychology. I know I do not need to say it here, but I don’t think juxtaposing fields or taking any other merely additive approach does much. It does something, yes: it can whet appetites and help students see the richness of a smorgasbord of knowledges. No small thing in our compartmentalized world. But what I, and hardly I alone, am drawn to is thinking *about*, and not just *within*, the discourses, characteristic problems, theories, methods, rhetorics and logics that shape the subject matter of any and all disciplines.

*How* we can do that becomes the obvious question as soon as we stop thinking of interdisciplinarity in terms of subject matters and methods

to be visited and borrowed from. This is a question to which important methodological responses are available, and still emerging, which is great. How could a philosopher who likes to think about rather than within boundaries not like that?

But I also believe that even when we focus on bounded fields and their methods from our meta- or methodological perspectives, we can and should also remember the wellsprings of our being that recall, animate, and enable the reasons and needs that press us to that level in the first place. And prime among those wellsprings, I believe, is that we are, each and every one of us, thinkers, and remain so before, during, and beyond the work we do as seekers of knowledge, including methodological and philosophical knowledge. After all, methodology, like and with philosophy, stakes out its territory “above,” on a higher level of abstraction, than subject matter and methods do, but they stake out a territory of their own expert knowledge all the same.

I should say, then, how I distinguish knowledge from thinking. On the most basic level, knowledge is comprised of the answers to questions posed and pursued to their conclusion in ways that are legitimated by an intellectual tradition as “sound.” Thinking is what we are doing as we pose and pursue those questions, but it is also, and more basically – and more freely, creatively, and responsibly – the capacity we have to question the acceptable questions, to imagine other ways of pursuing and responding to them, to be open to answers that are not compatible with those already established, and throughout, to keep reflecting on what anything and everything *means*.

That is, even if I know something, I can – and should, surely – keep asking what it *means*, what it asks of me and of others, what it suggests, why it *matters* for our lives, and those of others, and for the earth and worlds we necessarily share.

Such thinking, which is both individual and social (we think alone, but with many others, and all that we have learned with them, in mind), is always “out of order.” And that, of course, is why thinkers so often get in trouble. You do remember that Socrates was put to death for “corrupting the youth of Athens?” People tend to forget that when they speak about “the Socratic method,” I’ve found. But being intellectually “out of order” – being stubbornly a questioner of anyone and anything – is indeed threatening to all established orders, not just that of a culture’s knowledge. The philosophical, the political, and the educational are revealed in their mutual implications in that threat, just as they are in the more often invoked effects of new discoveries.

That obviously brings me to what I called the political wellsprings of my passion for interdisciplinarity and freshly integrative thinking. I have been working for over thirty years on trying to open curricula – which is to say, all fields of knowledge – to the knowledges, ways of thinking, stories, voices, contributions, visions of those who were for so long unjustly excluded, devalued, misinterpreted, silenced.

I began this work when I was shocked into thinking about prevailing constructions of fields of knowledge – about their claimed subject matter, and the methods by which those subjects were defined – by the startling realization that, through my whole lengthy education, I had not *noticed* that the majority of humankind (women, with all our differences, and significant groups of excluded men) had gone missing from what was being taught. Having noticed what I was not then supposed to notice, I was also struck by how precisely that huge absence in what was taught corresponded with unjust political, economic and social exclusions.

So there I was, all those years ago, with a question, and a quest: why and how did constructions of knowledge so effectively both hide and perpetuate their intellectually, morally, and politically potent exclusions, and how were we to remedy that? I started talking with faculty members in all sorts of fields all over the country about what it was that we were actually teaching, and how we could and should change it so that it might live up to its own claims to be by and about humans, and not just a very, very few of us.

I wrote about what I found in a book that came out in 1990 called *Transforming Knowledge\**, which will be out in a massively updated second edition in November. In sum, what became apparent to me is that deeply rooted assumptions about what it means to be fully, properly, normatively and ideally human always feed the tree of knowledge, from its sturdy trunk, to its various field-defined branches, to its most fresh and fragile flowerings, and that those assumptions have too often been stunningly biased, skewed, prejudicial – which is to say, just plain wrong conceptually as well as morally and politically. And they have been wrong in ways that sometimes lead to outright nonsense that is not just dangerous, but flat out, devastatingly deadly. How, then, could I believe that knowledge is apolitical, that it is morally neutral?

Of course, I don't mean that all of knowledge is wrong, that it is all deadly – but I do mean that some of it is, and that sometimes what is wrong and dangerous about it is so deeply buried and hidden within its abstractions, its definitions, its methods that even when we are committed to ongoing intellectual

work *against* all prejudices, and to doing such critical, creative thinking across all field boundaries, we can remain entrapped in those old errors.

Today, of course, we have terrific resources and good company with which to free our minds. We have women's studies, and Black or African American Studies, and Indian or Native, Indigenous Peoples Studies. We have disability studies; many ethnic studies programs; critical and cultural studies; multicultural studies; gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender studies and/or queer studies, and more. We also have environmental, ecology, and sustainability studies; peace studies; studies of technology and values; post-colonial studies; studies of "nation" and of diasporic peoples; and many more. And looking at this list – which is hardly itself inclusive of all the new scholarship – we realize just how exclusive the old knowledge was. Along with the majority of humankind, it marginalized some of the most pressing issues we face, including peace, the environment, the realities, threats and promises of a post-colonial but hardly yet non-imperial internationalism.

Those fields were all initially interdisciplinary for the obvious reason that no standing disciplines dealt at all, or appropriately, with their subjects and concerns. So, scholars worked both in and on their own original fields to make their subject matter more inclusive, and did so in conversation with similarly committed people in other fields.

But here, too, neither a subject nor a method-focused approach sufficed. We couldn't just add on whole groups of long excluded people(s) because of the ways the subjects and methods of the standing disciplines had been defined. If you define history as the story of public figures such as kings and generals, you cannot then add on the stories of those never allowed to become such public figures. You have to re-open the question of what "history" *means* if you want to include not only what all those other people did, but also how and why and to what effects people were, as sociologists say, stratified, ranked from high to low, and held in their "proper" places.

So, our work went through phases of being additive to our disciplines; then multi-disciplinary; then more genuinely interdisciplinary; then critically meta-disciplinary – and out of all that, we created the plethora of exciting new fields I invoked a few minutes ago. As you know, some of you were part of all that, of course, and we all learned from it. It is certainly among the reasons why interdisciplinarity has moved forward as not only valid but crucial to transformative education today.

This is a proud and creative set of achievements for a kind of interdisciplinarity that emerged and kept developing as the wellsprings of individual thinking and social conscience fed it. These new fields are

now in many cases themselves disciplines. They have basic texts, theories, methods, findings, and increasingly, people can earn doctorates in them, get jobs teaching them, and “train” new scholars into them. The same is true of interdisciplinarity: one can become an expert in Interdisciplinary Studies, as many of you so admirably are.

We are, then, at a crossroads. Some of us can now work in these new fields, and that is crucial. How else would new knowledge continue to emerge, become deeper and still more fruitful? But I have to say that I believe it is also still crucial to risk being “out of order,” to keep thinking in and across new fields. As history and today’s world tell us, even faith, even the most justice-oriented theories, even the truths most firmly established over time can, if studied and applied without being renewed by the wellsprings of open minds, hearts, and spirits that keep us responsive to new experiences, become something other than knowledge. They can become, instead, ideologies, by which I mean any conceptual system that has locked into any set of certainties such that adherents can, and do, refuse to recognize fresh questions; are no longer interested in learning from anomalies and mistakes; can see no reason or way to transfigure their knowledge through learning from alternative perspectives and values; and thus feel licensed to apply their certainties in ways that actually unilaterally impose them.

Having seen what closed knowledge systems can justify – which is where my research has taken me for years now as I have studied knowledges that turned ideological, such as the “science” of eugenics that licensed sterilizations and institutionalization of the “unfit” and went on to feed genocides – I can hardly *not* worry about efforts either to reinstate uncritically such traditional knowledge, *or* to establish new fields in tightly defined ways. Of course, I do not think Interdisciplinary Studies or the other new fields have thus closed yet: quite the contrary. But now, while they are still close to their wellsprings, I want to affirm those sources of questioning and social concern, and to connect them with possibilities of transformative education that is not just additive to standing fields, old or new.

This brings me to my third passion, education, and my experiences in pursuing it through alternative, progressive, interdisciplinary learning and teaching. These experiences have also taught me just how highly suspect such education – like and with the free thinking and social commitments that are its wellspring – has been, and remains to those who have not had it themselves, which is to say, to most people.

I received my undergraduate degree from Sarah Lawrence College, where students take only three courses at a time, but also meet regularly

with the teachers of those courses in a tutorial for which they do additional independent work in pursuit of their own interests. There are no majors, and almost no requirements. I spent four years discovering that when I studied what I was really interested in, whatever it was – and I did wander, from writing to philosophy to embryology to political science and more – the subjects connected in fascinating ways. Even as I was learning about them, it was not difficult to pose them the same questions and hear, at least in part, interesting relations as well as distinctiveness in their responses. I thus discovered what transgressive interdisciplinarity offers by following my own genuine questions and interests, not those of the faculty or of any pre-designed program, either – but there the faculty were when I wanted to talk, willing and ready to help me design research projects that would take me further, and deeper. I was never once bored, and because I was following my own interests, I did all sorts of things that, if imposed on me, would indeed have been boring. If you know why you want and need some learning, you go get it, you learn it quickly and put it to use, and so also remember it without having to memorize it. Yes, I think all this was terrific, and it has for years led me to teach that way myself insofar as I am able, not only to share it with others, but to keep it going for myself.

But, yes, questions are raised about such a non-discipline-based education, and they are similar to those raised about less radical interdisciplinary programs, courses, projects. Did I, for example, “master” any one standing disciplinary field “in depth”? Not if that means having been “exposed” to what professionals in the field agree to specify that novices must “encounter,” but my independent research combined with the small seminar discussions faculty did design took me deeper than survey or introductory courses, and some major courses, that must keep moving on to “cover” their pre-designed map, can find the time to go. When I went on to a discipline-centered graduate school, was I prepared? Again, not in terms defined by coverage of subject matter. But it didn’t take long for me to learn what I needed: that’s what I had learned to do at college, and pretty soon I managed to do quite well. And I also managed to find graduate professors who were themselves thinkers and engaged scholars who transgressed the boundaries of fields and were admired – I did observe – because of that.

I am not easily convinced, then, that progressive, interdisciplinary education is flakey, doesn’t ensure learning in-depth, and so doesn’t prepare students for further learning. On the contrary. Keep in touch with the wellsprings, find the good teachers, learn to use a range of resources, and those internal disciplines of interest and commitment will take you right

through the common denominator level of pre-planned programs to the original depths of inquiry from which they were born.

Since my undergraduate and graduate education, I have taught for the major part of my career at an interdisciplinary graduate school in which faculty served as thinking friends, or mentors, to adults who came to us to create their own individualized doctoral programs. My experiences there only confirmed my belief that subject matter and methods are most effectively learned, and remembered, when they are studied by people who find out for themselves why they matter, and do so by following their own interests rather than as we prescribe the order and way in which they must be learned. While I worked at that university, I even had the great gift of learning along with degree candidates who were helping to create the very fields in which they earned their degrees – fields such as women’s studies, environmental studies, acoustic ecology, literary eco-criticism, peace studies, Indian/Africana studies, critical pedagogy and peace.

Could I evaluate such original work in fields in which not only I but few others were “trained” (since some of them didn’t yet exist as fields)? With the help of others, I think I could. Where substantive knowledge was at issue, we had subject experts on the doctoral committees (which is what dominant-mode graduate programs do too, of course). But we also evaluated learners’ thinking, their abilities to stay true to the interests that animated it, and to inform those interests by engagement with relevant resources within and beyond the academy, as well as to communicate, throughout, across disciplines and with diverse others.

Was all this controversial? Indeed, and it still is. The university for which I worked was put under enormous pressure not to offer degrees in areas that could not be compared and evaluated by criteria appropriate to already established fields. It now offers degrees in Interdisciplinary Studies, an umbrella that protects the wellsprings of interests, commitments, and free thinking of its faculty and learners, but will now itself have to be defined and delimited, along with only a few also pre-defined areas of specialization. Why? Because being accountable is today increasingly defined as being measurable against a common yardstick.

Dominant systems in education as elsewhere do indeed work against the free thinking that is, precisely, “out of order.” They do so by equating knowledge with the definition of subject matter and methods as these have already been specified by certified field specialists, and then insisting that new knowledge be compatible and coherent with what is already definitive of that field, and consonant with its methods. Which is to say that “new”

and “original” knowledge must be no more than additive to what is already known within a professionalized field.

They (a word to watch out for: also often “we”) then impose further boundaries on free thinking and genuinely original, interest-driven inquiry by confusing standardization with standards. And the problem with standardization is that it requires that there be one common measure against which to evaluate degrees of variation of that commonality – which to say, variations of sameness. Why on earth, I have to ask, do we think that excellence, and the originality that is what lifts the merely “sound” to the level of excellence, is only and always and necessarily a matter of degree? There is excellence of kind, of course: we can easily measure who among students has worked out the most already familiar (and already solved) problems correctly by following the same rules as everybody else. But why is that the only kind of achievement with which education is and should be concerned? Surely it need not be: the greatest of the works we teach and honor in our various fields would have failed to measure up by such standardized measures. Plato didn’t follow the rules; he challenged and broke and transcended them. Galileo didn’t follow the rules, nor did W.E.B. DuBois, or Sojourner Truth or Jane Addams or Frantz Fanon or Simone Weil or Thich Nhat Hanh or Elizabeth Cady Stanton or Michael Foucault or Maya Linn or Monique Wittig or Gloria Anzaldua or anyone else who changed our minds and hearts and our systems.

This is why I care so much about staying close to the wellsprings of thinking and the passions of each unique student: I care about reaching as high as a richly diverse array of human minds and spirits and cultures can inspire us all to reach – and I know from experience that we can all reach higher and go deeper when we are not forced to conform to standardized measures of standardized learning as it is prepared to be measured by them. I care about freeing, not training and constraining, minds so that we may keep renewing our efforts to contribute, through education, to a better future for far more of us.

This is why I think our assessments need to be appropriate not only, if of course always also, to bodies of knowledge and established methods – not solely to the destinations already reached, and the tracks and trains already built to take others there – but to the free art of thinking that persistently jumps the tracks, and may thereby lead to the renewal and sometimes the change of established knowledge. But how are we to teach and to evaluate such free thinking? Some of you have suggestions along these lines, I know; it is exciting to see such good thinkers responding to this crucial challenge.

Since this is an ongoing process, which should also keep renewing itself as we all keep trying to figure it out together, I will just say that among – that’s all, among, by no means definitive of – the markers of the free, engaged, individual and socially meaningful thinking that is the wellspring of interdisciplinary, integrative, and, yes, transformative education seem to me to be these:

1. Reflexivity, or the ability to observe one’s own thinking, to jump off and reflect on any straightforward, one-way track and so also to gain the perspective to evaluate it. This is the capacity we have to think *about* and not only *within* what we know, believe, hope, fear, feel, and it is related therefore both to critical thinking and to the consciences we develop when we stop and think about what we are doing in the ongoing moral and political self-assessments we do all the time. Interdisciplinarity that practices methodological *thinking about*, in particular, helps to develop this crucial reflexivity, which can, we should remember, also keep us thinking even about any methodological knowledge, political creeds, moral dogmas.
2. Representative thinking, or the ability to think as others, even those quite different from us, have thought and might think. This is not the same as knowing what others have said, such that we can only repeat it like parrots. It entails stepping outside of what we know to adopt something like the perspective of others such that we think for ourselves, but with them in mind. This ability allows us to hear and respond to, as well as to pose, startling questions that come “aslant” to what we already know such that we have to stop and think afresh. Learning to think within several disciplines, within differing cultures and languages, with differing people helps us have many more than just ourselves in mind when we think. It is why we can then continue to become better at understanding other people, other languages, other ways of making sense, and making art, and making moral and political choices.
3. Holistic thinking, or the ability to see a fact, a position, a theory, a phenomenon, a situation as a whole – to be able to understand what makes it more than an assemblage of parts, what gives it its uniqueness as well as its relational commonalities. Interdisciplinary studies help develop holistic thinking particularly because they provide the comparisons and contrasts that help us see any body of knowledge from the outside, and in

- broader contexts, and these also help us see how fresh integrations may be achieved.
4. Critical thinking, specifically as critique, by which I mean the ability to discern the assumptions, the differing modes of achieving coherence (such as logics, narratives, heuristic inquiry, interpretive perspectives) that shape any position or theory or fact – that, in forming it from within, make it what and as it is. So, by “critical thinking,” I do not mean only “becoming more logical.” I mean the analytic ability to see how any particular knowledge is constructed – its underpinnings and formations.
  5. Responsible thinking, specifically in the mode of the ability to imagine the *consequences* of any and all knowledges, the thinking that poses the “so what?” questions that remind us that knowledge does indeed matter, that it affects the world and how we act in it, and that *how* it affects the world is an important consideration when we evaluate its adequacy, its truth claims. Interdisciplinarity can be crucial to such responsible thinking, because it shows us how ideas and knowledge spread across fields and so helps us imagine more fully the changes they do make across and beyond academe.
  6. And, finally (for now) complex thinking, the kind that focuses us on the given that there is always more to know, that there are always differing perspectives, many forms of relation and of distinctiveness that surpass any settled conclusions from the past, any particular body of knowledge – even knowledge of complexity – we have or can have.

Can we test for such abilities? Can we assess them? Why not? We will need each other’s help in learning how to do so, since we are all prepared for and inclined toward some of them more than others. But so much the better: here is another inter-, trans- and meta-disciplinary thinking project, and one that challenges us to practice what we preach by learning with each other.

As I am sure is more than obvious by now, I truly hope that, as interdisciplinary studies continues to emerge as a field, it will become, not one more preserve for the “trained” few, but an open public space that refreshes the thinking of all who join us from their own multiple “homes” seeking renewing relations with others whom we keep reaching out to include, as AIS does so well. After all, if we also include people whose work remains in the disciplines, and those whose modes of assessment do not now hold them and their students accountable to the sorts of thinking some of us so value, perhaps one day we will together bridge one

of the most dangerous educational divides of all – the one between knowledge preserved as it has been, and too often preserved with its old, ideologically-locked in exclusions uncritiqued, and the thinking we need to remain free and open and creative, and so both responsive and responsible not just to professional peers, but to the world in which we all live and have our being.

Education, after all, should not only preserve what any group defines as “the best” of the past. It should also, and more importantly, be conservationist: it should renew and revitalize the past as it sustains a healthy, lively, diverse, changing present that develops from, rather than just replicating, the past. If education is not thus conservationist, I fear we will fail the future and the new gifts aborning in each and every one of our students, who are individually and collectively the renewing wellsprings of the ongoing discovery of what it can mean to be human on this earth – a question no knowledge, no past generations, can or should presume to have answered.

We are accountable, then, most of all for how well we keep the questions going, and the minds that ask them both free and engaged with important issues. And on that count, you, who keep breaching boundaries with interdisciplinary, integral, transformative teaching and learning, are evidently crucial, and deserve the fullest support of any educational institution that aspires to do more than “produce” standardized people, job-holders, professionals, citizens.

Thank you for continuing to go against that grain to hold the future open even as you are creating new homes for the questioning we need to keep the present, too, free and welcoming of thinkers as well as knowers.

*\*Transforming Knowledge*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press (1990). (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2004).

**Biographical note:** Dr. Elizabeth Minnich’s book, *Transforming Knowledge* (Temple, 1990), received the Association of American Colleges and Universities’ Frederick W. Ness Award for “best book in liberal learning” of its year. She has served as an editor and author for the AAC&U’s journal, *Liberal Learning*, published in numerous scholarly journals, and serves on six academic journals’ editorial boards. She is Series Editor for *The New Academy* (a series of anthologies focused on contemporary critical, creative scholarship and teaching) from Temple University Press. Dr. Minnich earned her M.A. and Ph.D. in Philosophy from The Graduate Faculty for Political and Social Science of The New School University in New York, where she was a teaching assistant for Hannah Arendt. She wrote her dissertation on John Dewey and has continued to work on issues of democracy and education, with particular focus on inclusive scholarship, curricula, teaching, and institutional practices.