**Humanities and Opportunity**

Idea from Linda Adler-Kassner (in the form of a rapid sketch generated in the process of a set of recent emails in response to the Obama initiative on accountability and tuition in higher ed):

**[Linda to Alan, Feb. 1, 2012, 8:19 am]**

Alan, I'm rushing to get ready for class, but will look at this after I return. I do want to raise one thing for consideration, though. I don't know if any of you have yet read the transcript of Obama's speech at U of Michigan last week, but he expanded there on a proposal he made in the State of the Union on linking federal funding for higher ed to more stable tuition. He then went a step farther, suggestion that we needed a Race to the Top for higher education, and that this should be linked to accountability. Since he was in Michigan, he made the analogy between education-report card-building a better car.

The Ed Department is already all over this, and it will likely be linked to changes in accreditation. The time to try to shape some of this is now, before those changes take place. We'll want to have this in the backs of our minds, I think... it might be worth raising, too. I'll think through some possibilities for permutations after class... but wanted to raise it in case you thought it might be relevant for the meeting this aft.

(Note from Lindsay: Here is a link to the video: [http://www.dailykos.com/story/2012/01/27/1059017/-UPDATED-with-full-video-of-speech:-President-Obama-at-University-of-Michigan](http://www.dailykos.com/story/2012/01/27/1059017/-UPDATED-with-full-video-of-speech%3A-President-Obama-at-University-of-Michigan). The bulk of the education stuff is from around 19:45 - 24:30. I also found a transcript of the speech: <http://www.freep.com/article/20120127/NEWS15/120127032/Full-transcript-Obama-s-speech-today-education-Ann-Arbor>)

**[Alan to Linda, 1:16 pm]**

Thanks, Linda. I have been hearing about this, but I haven't actually seen the speech. Do you want to suggest a project idea about this at the end of our meeting as we are beginning the work of organizing to start projects? I'm hoping that what will come out of our meeting are the beginnings of three or four project teams.

**[Linda to Alan, 1:42 pm]**

Alan, if a project it were to fit the frame surrounding the speech, it would be something like this:

"Humanities and opportunity"

\*what do the study and practice of humanities foster in 21st century citizens/workers?

(to get to this: what constitutes "study and practice of humanities"?)

For example:

Curiosity

Ability to see issues from multiple perspectives

Ability to represent knowledge and develop new knowledge through communication

(... and so on)

\*how does study and practice in humanities achieve these things?

(where does it happen? Who defines and enacts it?)

\*how can we know when this study/practice is working - fostering those things?

This obviously isn't going to be about one instance of enacting the humanities. Perhaps, instead, it's about

So - one thought would be to develop a representation -- like a map or other cool visual -- of the humanities' (plural intended) contributions to habits of mind or strategies (I hate the word "skills," so I don't use it...) that are considered critical \_right now\_. This could be a launching point (or a touchstone) for other documents, representations, etc.

If something like this seems like it might resonate well, I'm happy to propose. I'm just trying to think about how to make connections between our initiative and these larger conversations -- because that's one very effective way to get attention (of the good kind) from audiences outside of the academy in my experience.

-Linda