Federally-funded Research Centers as Links between Research and Practice

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Of the many varieties and forms that centers can take, the particular form I represent is the federally-funded education research center. The U.S. Department of Education funds 20 education research centers, and it funds 9 labs as well. In principle, the centers generate new knowledge and the labs disseminate that knowledge. The centers differ from one another by the topics they study and the labs differ by the regions of the country they serve. Though the primary job of centers is to conduct research, they are also responsible for assuring that the work they do is relevant to practice and for assuring that practitioners learn about their work.

For my contribution to this symposium, I address three questions related to the issue of how centers can connect research and practice. The first has to do with what a center is; the second with the meaning of the phrase, "connecting research with practice;" and the third with how centers can be established to promote an optimal connection between research and practice.

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I. What are centers and how do they differ from other forms of grant recipients?

Suppose you were a federal agency and you had $2 million you wanted to spend on research that would lead to improvements in the education of at-risk students. One of your options would be to create an entire institution devoted to the education of at-risk children. Or, if such an institution already existed, to add your $2 million to its existing funding base. Another option would be to invest the $2 million in a research center -- not to an entire institution but to a unit within an institution which would concentrate its efforts on this problem. Your third option would be to fund some 20 independent researchers, each for around $100,000, to do their own independent studies or program development activities, all of which would also be oriented toward the same problem. Which would be the most fruitful approach, and why?

Keep in mind, too, that, as a federal funding agency, you can only award funds through a competitive process in which you specify in advance what you want to fund. Therefore, you must decide whether to fund individuals, institutions or centers before you see proposals from any of these units. So you don't know whether any institution exists that would satisfy your conditions for either an institution or a center, nor whether enough individuals exist to produce 20 solid independent projects. Instead, you have to make your decision on the basis of some notion of the kinds of systems that each of these funding arrangements creates, and of how these systems might further your goal.

The main argument for institutional funding has to do with long-term development and with leveraging your money. Generally speaking, the reason you go after an institution is because institutions are enduring, and if you
want enduring attention to your problem, you would be inclined to fund an institution and to help do whatever is necessary to survive and to thrive. When Jim Kelly, president of the National Professional Teaching Standards Board, asks Congress to support this board, he is asking for institutional support. The funds would enable the board to get itself underway, to solicit funds from other agencies, and, over time, to become a self-sustaining operation that would no longer need funds from Congress. Institutional support need not be temporary, of course. Sometimes, funding agencies establish institutions and continue to provide them with core support indefinitely.

Most funding agencies in Washington don't have the option of funding an institution. Only Congress can do that. So the decisions that agencies face have to do with the relative advantages of centers and individual grantees. Moreover, even if you did have that option, you might hesitate to give your money to an institution because you would have little control over what the institution did with its money once you have given it up.

The argument for multiple independent projects, on the other hand, has to do with competition in the marketplace of ideas and the need to foster the development of a community of scholars who govern themselves through a marketplace of ideas. If you believe there are multiple plausible ideas that need to be sorted out and debated, you might be more inclined to use your $2 million for multiple small awards, rather than an institution, and to let all the grant recipients put their ideas into the marketplace, and then to let the community of scholars sort through these ideas and see which stand up best under scrutiny. But you might still hesitate to distribute your money to
multiple grantees for fear that their work would be so scattered that it would not add up to anything when they finished.

Centers offer a nice compromise between institutions and individuals in that they may provide greater centralized control than either of the other two approaches. Though the funds go to an institution, they are there for a specific purpose and can be removed if that purpose is not being met. Moreover, if they are carefully constructed, they might be able to offer at least some of the advantages of a community of scholars. So it would be easy to argue that a center would be the optimal solution.

One of the main arguments for centers over individual grantees has to do with coordination: that coordination among researchers hinges on having a center. But other arrangements can be made to coordinate researchers. In the early days of the National Institute of Education, for instance, it funded grantees to work independently on common problems and it also sponsored conferences at which grantees could exchange ideas and share their findings with one another. Thus the funding agency performed a function analogous to that which centers are presumed to serve. So you need not have a center just to assure that work is coordinated. It is possible to coordinate individual grantees if you want to. Moreover, if you want to promote competition in the marketplace of ideas, coordination may be a drawback rather than a benefit.

Other arguments for centers have to do with the topic that needs to be addressed. For instance, topics that are ill-defined or multifaceted might be difficult to sort out in a marketplace of ideas, for the marketplace would seem more like a tower of babble than like a rigorous debate. A center, on the other hand, could bring together researchers from a variety of disciplines and forge a long-term collaborative relationship among them. This effort
Conversely, a topic like "school improvement," also big and complicated, has a tradition of research that has defined its boundaries and its central concepts pretty well. Funding a center for research on school improvement might not advance our knowledge and understanding of school improvement much because such a center might simply sustain and institutionalize the existing tradition. Instead, we might be able to advance our knowledge and understanding of school improvement more if we distributed our money to 20 different researchers, representing diverse disciplines and points of view.

This discussion suggests that centers might have advantages over individual grantees when they can bring diverse researchers together for a long period of time, can foster a high level of interaction among them, can legitimate and institutionalize an area of inquiry, and can stimulate new generations of researchers to adopt this area of inquiry as their own. But even acknowledging these properties still leaves the funding agency with the task of defining the important organizational features of centers that will yield these advantages. Some popular candidates are: the length of time the center should exist, the level of effort the center devotes to the issue, the centralization of the work, the level of coordination and interdependence among individual research projects, and degree to which the center offers some evidence that it will institutionalize the work through, for instance, including graduate students.

Consider first length of time. At one time, all NIE/OERI centers received ongoing, institutional-like support. The same set of centers were funded for some 20 years. But as Congress gradually reduced appropriations for individual grants, the research community began to pressure NIE to re-compete the centers, arguing that funds should be allocated to the best ideas,
not to standing institutions. In other words, they wanted a competitive marketplace of ideas to determine who would receive center grant awards. In response to these concerns, OERI re-competed its centers and redefined them as five-year grants. OERI now anticipates regular quintennial recompetitions which will enable the research community to compete for scarce research dollars, and will enable the OERI to regularly re-consider the topics which it’s centers will address. But this change also alters the concept of a center, for a center no longer entails a long-term institutional commitment, but instead a potentially non-renewable five-year investment.

The level of effort devoted to the center is generally assumed to be a proxy for the number -- and sometimes even the diversity -- of researchers who are working on the identified problem. In government parlance, level of effort is measured in terms of the dollars invested in the center. My center is one of the new five-year centers. It receives $1.2 million per year, for a total of $6 million over the five-year period. The centers in its cohort generally have price tags between $800,000 and $1.2 million per year, which translates into, say, 20 - 30 half-time researchers. But two years ago, OERI funded a second series of centers priced at around $500,000 each, and some received three-year, rather than five-year, awards. These new centers were quickly dubbed "mini-centers," and the AERA challenged the concept of a mini-center on the ground that, to be a "center," one needed a critical mass of resources.

This issue of size poses an interesting dilemma for the funding agencies to deal with. The arguments I listed earlier attended more to the diversity of researchers and the fact that they were concentrated in one location than to their numbers per se. Moreover, given the other centers on the podium with
me today, one could easily challenge the notion that any particular number of dollars would necessarily guarantee the critical concentration of researchers one might need. On the other hand, OERI's centers are must comply with a number of costly requirements, such as convening national advisory boards, publishing newsletters, and so forth. These activities tend to have fixed costs, regardless of the costs of the research program, so smaller centers use a greater proportion of their funds on these activities than do larger centers. Given its array of requirements, it might be reasonable to assume that OERI centers do need a certain critical mass of funding in order to really push knowledge forward.

The third organizational feature nominated above has to do with centralizing the researchers. One could argue that, regardless of the length of time or the level of resources, there is a special advantage to bring diverse researchers together to collaborate, argue, share findings, or interact in other ways that facilitate progress in the topic area. But that suggests that some institutions need to exist that have the requisite number and diversity of researchers already there. In fact, many OERI-funded centers are really multiple-institution collaboratives; these "centers" actually resides in two, three, or even five different institutions. Such organizational arrangements can still promote interactions among researchers, of course, but may also pose some special problems in terms of promoting real collaboration that single-site centers do not have.

The fourth organizational feature nominated above has to do with how well research activities were coordinated, mutually interdependent, or were building on one another in some important way. There have always been a few OERI-sponsored "centers" that were really umbrella organizations for unrelated
individual research projects. In fact, the reward structure of universities makes this form of center most attractive to faculty. Most researchers have been acculturated into a competitive marketplace of ideas and consequently want to pursue their own research agendas. Few are willing to tolerate externally-imposed constraints, and many don't want to collaborate because they don't want to have to share the eventual authorship. Funding an organization that calls itself a center, then, gives no assurance that the work will in fact differ from the work that might have been funded through individual grants.

Finally, funding agencies might look for evidence in a proposed center that it offers some way of institutionalizing the work. This might consist, for instance, of drawing on researchers who have hard-money positions at the institution, rather than hiring new researchers with center funds specifically to do the work the center demands, on the ground that these people will remain at the institution once funding goes away; drawing on graduate students so that a new generation of researchers who care about this issue will be produced; or of indicating in some other way that the "center" consists of more than the particular projects that the funding agency supports. In fact, OERI centers differ a great deal in this regard. Some draw on faculty, some on independently-hired researchers. Moreover, these conditions would be very difficult to meet outside of a university, where hard money and graduate students are most likely to be.

Though all of these organizational conditions have been nominated as reasonable ways of assuring that a funding agency will get the kind of multidisciplinary and collaborative work that it wants, OERI centers vary on all of them. They vary in their duration and level of funding, in how
centralized their researchers are, and in how closely their research projects are coordinated. And the advantages that are presumed to inhere in these centers often do not. But despite the diversity of center structures, and the despite the variation in how well centers provide the kind of concentrated, coordinated and institutionalized effort that we want, we still know very little about which organizational conditions seem most likely to yield these optimal research practices.

II. Why should centers connect research and practice?

Now let us consider the arguments for connecting research and practice. Why should a funding agency sponsor work that is designed to connect research and practice? Why shouldn’t it fund each of these activities separately? I mentioned earlier that the OERI has traditionally funded both centers and labs, each with a different mission. Though each type of agency does a little of each activity, the general idea is that one produces new knowledge and the other makes that knowledge available to practitioners. In fact, the history of US education funding is heavily weighted toward separate funding of research, development, dissemination and program development, and practice. I will call this the specialist model of connecting research and practice: In this model, there are research specialists, practice specialists, and specialists at carrying messages back and forth between the others.

There are several reasons for this specialist way of thinking. One is that federal policymakers do not spend money simply to strengthen the system. Instead, they spend money to solve specific problems. If they decide the problem exists because of a lack of knowledge, they fund research. If they decide it exists because relevant knowledge has not been disseminated, they
fund dissemination. And so on. Ironically, this sort of thinking is reinforced by the education community, which has become splintered into groups who specialize in discrete activities. So as Congress stews about a new problem, it is visited by people who claim new knowledge is needed, by others who claim the knowledge is there but it hasn't been disseminated, and so forth.

But another, and more important reason why the specialist model persists is that these activities really are different, and they really do require different kinds of people and different kinds of expertise. Good practice requires dedication and commitment. Good research, on the other hand, requires a certain distance from the phenomenon being studied, a lack of commitment to any particular outcome. Dissemination, on yet a third hand, might be akin to counseling: It requires a special kind of interpersonal skill.

Under the specialist model, one connects research and practice by fostering cooperation or collaborating among other federally-funded institutions. Centers connect their research to practice in part by sharing their findings with labs and by sending copies of all of their paper products to the ERIC clearinghouses. In addition, they are required to convene national advisory boards to assure that their research agendas are practical, and to publish newsletters to assure that their findings move more quickly out to practitioners. Most centers, of course, do more than these things, but the system as a whole seems designed to function in this way.

The specialist model has been extensively criticized for promoting a narrow view of the relationship between research and practice, in two respects. First, it does not acknowledge that knowledge can derive from
practice itself, but instead assumes all knowledge must derive from research; and second it assumes that information flows only in one direction -- from researchers to practitioners. Centers convene national advisory boards to assure that their research addresses questions practitioners care about, but little thought is given to the possibility that center researchers could learn something about the phenomena they are studying from practitioners.

There are those who would argue not only that practitioners know a lot about the phenomena researchers study, but that they should be doing the research themselves. These critics advocate a variety of new models, ranging from reflective practitioners to practitioner-researchers to program developers who evaluate their work. I will call these ideas, as a set, a fusion model for connecting research and practice, since they generally advocate fusing the researcher and practitioner into one person. The goal of the fusion model is to strengthen the practitioner not by giving him more knowledge but by strengthening his ability to solve his own problems. The model solves certain practical problems of the specialist model, in that it assures that the research is relevant to practice and that practitioners, at least those involved in the work, quickly become aware of the findings from research. But should researcher-practitioners also be required to disseminate their findings to other practitioners? If the goal of the fusion model is to strengthen the system, then dissemination makes little sense. Instead, all practitioners should have the opportunity to become practitioner-researchers. This raises a difficult policy question, for no funding agency can afford to fund such linkages throughout the entire population of practitioners. In federal policy circles, one reason you fund centers is because they serve
national needs, not local needs. If a center serves only local practitioners, then, presumably, it should be locally funded.

The more important issue, though, with respect to the fusion model is whether or not these two kinds of activities really can be fused. I argued earlier that good practice requires commitment and that good research requires a sort of detached curiosity. Just as some researchers are insensitive to the concerns of practice, so some practitioners are insensitive to the concerns of research. Some people can be very good at both, but there will always be some who, though perhaps even excellent at one, will not be good at the other. Moreover, we have no way of distinguishing those practitioners who would also do a good job at research, nor the researchers who would also do a good job at practice. And that raises a problem for funding agencies who must make competitive awards.

Right now, the fusion model converts the centers role from one of producing knowledge to one of producing a capacity to produce knowledge. Perhaps at some future time, the capacity will already be there, but for now, and from a funding agency's point of view, the fusion model could easily appear to be a high-risk model: it threatens to be only locally useful, and there is no way to know in advance that the particular people nominated to participate in any such center will be able to satisfactorily balance the tension between detached curiosity and commitment.

Yet a third model for connecting research and practice was offered in the original proposal for my center, the NCRTE. We proposed a consortium of colleges of teacher education which would interact in such a way that everyone studied each other. Researchers from College A, B and C would visit College D, while people from B study C and D would visit A, and so forth. I will call
this a reciprocity model: it encouraged reciprocal relations not only among institutions but also between research and practice, in that each institution would learn more about its own practices in the process of learning about other practices. The reciprocity model requires that each participating institution have a capacity for both research and practice, though not necessarily that the same individuals do both. That is, at best each institution would house individuals who were both teacher educators and researchers, and at least it would house both activities, even if not within the same people. In addition, the model required that researchers be capable of collaborating on a large integrated project and that participating practitioners be able to tolerate serious scrutiny of their practices. As a model for research, it could be construed as the height of interaction between research and practice.

But it could be also construed as the height of incest, and that is how the OERI perceived it. In fact, numerous changes were made in our study design before we received full funding from the OERI. First, OERI rightly pointed out that our studies were limited to teacher education as it existed in large research-oriented institutions. And they were right. Though we hadn't intended to bias the work by limiting our study to particular kinds of institutions, this was the type of institution in which we could find both practitioners and researchers. In our effort to recognize the need for both specialties, while also recognizing a need to fuse the two activities, our design was limited to institutions that contained both specialties. We did not include, for instance, any small liberal arts colleges, any historically black institutions, or any school-based induction programs, for we were not aware of researchers in any such programs. From the sponsor's point of view,
the study was biased because it would not include the full range of approaches
to teacher education.

Second, though our design held the potential to enhance everyone's
understanding of how teacher education works, it also held the potential to
constrain all researchers from expressing critical judgments about one
another, for fear of spoiling the social relationship that had been
established, or conversely of creating a name-calling contest in which
everyone counter-criticized every one else's criticisms. This strikes me as a
serious problem in any attempt to connect research and practice through self-
study or through reciprocal study.

Our study now includes a much more diverse array of examples of teacher
education, but at the same time, it's design looks much more like a
traditional study: researchers who reside in the center study practitioners
who reside elsewhere. The sharing, give-and-take quality that characterized
the original proposal is almost entirely gone.

A fourth model for connecting research and practice could be to train
more people, and encourage more people, to do both practice and research, even
if they do not necessarily do these two activities at the same time. I will
call this the **tandem model** for connecting research and practice. It
encourages people to be practicing teacher educators as well as a teacher-
education researchers, without necessarily studying their own teacher
education practices or the practices of their colleagues and friends. People
who wear both hats are more likely to engage in research that is practically
relevant, and may be better able to separate their commitment to their own
practices from the questions they pose in their research. The potential for
bias is still present, of course, but it might be somewhat reduced from that of the fusion or reciprocal models.

All of this suggests to me that there is no one best to connect research and practice. I have described four models for doing so, each of which is open to criticism. The central problem in connecting these two activities is finding an optimal way to resolve the tension between, on one hand, encouraging the kind of detached curiosity that makes for good research, while on the other hand encouraging the kind of commitment that makes for good practice.

III. How to Enhance a Center’s Ability to Link Research and Practice

And now at last, having considered the nature of centers and the different models they may employ for connecting research and practice, we can consider the question of how a funding agency can create a center that can accomplish this task. One thing it must do, of course, is to decide which model of connection it prefers. Recognizing that each model has both advantages and disadvantages, the funding agency may choose different models for different research issues. Perhaps a fusion model would be best for research on restructuring schools, and a specialist model for research on student cognitive development, and a tandem model for teacher education. Sorting this out requires a good deal of thought in itself.

One strategy might be to develop a reward structure within the host institution that recognizes both types of activities. Michigan State’s College of Education, for instance, encourages all faculty to do a mixture of teaching, research, and service, and it evaluates faculty on all three of these. If you spend half of your time teaching and half of it doing research,
for instance, then half of your evaluation is based on your teaching and half is based on your research. This system encourages faculty to give equal attention to all of their activities, rather than to concentrate exclusively on one of them. There are still many faculty, of course, who specialize in teaching or in research, and it is possible that they should do that. But an incentive system like this might be more likely to produce individuals who are both practitioners and researchers, some of whom are able fuse these activities, so that they do both at the same time, and some who do them in tandem; that is, the do both but not at the same time.

But incentives are controlled by the host institution. The funding agency is limited to defining the mission of the center and its organizational structure. Since I have already discussed organizational structures, let me not consider mission statements.

Let's continue to assume that the funding agency wants to create a center that somehow resolves the tension between the commitment needed for good practice, on one hand, and the detached curiosity needed for good research on the other. No resolution can make the tension go away; but some formal method of institutionally resolving it is necessary if either research or practice are to function productively. Here are four examples of center missions, all in the area of teacher education, that provide very different ways of resolving that tension:

- The Center for the Advancement of Fifth-year Programs
- The Center for Research on Teacher Education
- The Center for the Advancement of Reflective Teaching
- The Center for Research on Learning to Teach
Even if all of these centers are trying to connect research with practice, the way they do so will differ considerably simply because their defined missions differ. The first, I will argue, tilts toward commitment and the last toward detached curiosity. Those in the middle try to balance the two more evenly, but they do so in very different ways.

When the mission is to advance fifth-year teacher education programs, both practitioners and researchers to be committed to the fifth year program, and both are detached about how best to accomplish such programs. As practitioners, members of this center can devote their energy to improving their own fifth-year programs; as researchers, they can study such questions as what kind of institutional barriers hinder transition from four-year to fifth-year programs or what the relative efficacy is of alternative forms for fifth year programs.

But researchers in this center would not be likely to discover that fifth-year programs were, say, less effective than five-year programs. Because of their commitment to fifth-year programs, they are not capable of the detached curiosity that is required to compare fifth-year and five-year programs. This center's mission, then, connects research and practice by harnessing commitments, focusing them on a single idea, and by prescribing the range of questions about which researchers may have detached curiosity. In this way, members of this center can be either researchers or practitioners or both, for all members share the same commitments and the same areas of detached curiosity. While it offers a nice solution for those who are committed to fifth-year programs, it does not offer a nice solution for those who are not.
The mission of conducting research on teacher education does not impose this focus on its members. In practice, of course, we know that most human beings are committed to many things, and that members of this center will be committed to a variety of ideas within the domain of teacher education -- to contexts of teacher education such as field experiences, to techniques such as microteaching, to content areas such as foundations courses, and to pedagogies such as teaching through case analyses. But members of this center do not necessarily share the same commitments; they might interact with one another like a community of independent scholars.

But a disadvantage of this center is that the commitments are not publicly acknowledged, and, being unacknowledged, they are more free to interfere with detached curiosity. The boundaries within which members are capable of detached curiosity have not been articulated. This introduces the possibility that research could be presented as more detached than it really is. Still, this mission provides a more even balance between commitment and detached curiosity that the first mission does. Its broader content focus, on teacher education rather than on fifth-year programs, allows a broader range of questions to be addressed with detached curiosity. It also tolerates a more diverse array of commitments among its members, so that, whether members are practitioners or researchers, they are likely to find their ideas challenged by their colleagues. Note, though, that this center does carry one implicit institutional commitment, for its mission suggests that teacher education, writ large, is a legitimate enterprise, one worth studying and engaging in.

Now let's consider the third center, which is devoted to the advancement of reflective teaching. Like the first center mission, this one implies a
rather focused agenda. But it offers yet a different way of resolving the tension between commitment and detached curiosity than the first center does: even though participants in this center are committed to the idea of reflective teaching, they are not committed to any particular means for producing reflective teachers -- not to a particular form of teacher education, nor even to teacher education in general. As practitioners or as researchers, members of this center can seek new ways to encourage reflection in teachers regardless of the form these new methods might take. So this center retains the advantage of the first center, in that it articulates the idea to which it is committed, and delineates the range of questions about which its members are capable of detached curiosity, but it broadens the range of issues about which centers may have detached curiosity.

The forth center mission I listed focused on research on learning to teach. Of the four, it offers the broadest boundaries around which its members may have detached curiosity. It is not committed to any particular form of teacher education, nor even to teacher education in general; nor is it committed to any sort of outcome or kind of teaching. Instead, this center attends to the very broad and general question of how and under what circumstances teachers learn to teach. Researchers in this center can study all forms of teacher learning with detached curiosity, regardless of whether their learning occurs within the context of a formal teacher education program and regardless of what teachers learn about teaching. It is not clear what practitioners could do in such a center, however. This center tips toward the toward detachment side of the scale, and away from the commitment side.

The teacher education center I work in most closely matches this fourth mission. NCRTE researchers are studying a variety of approaches and
alternatives to teacher education in an effort to determine what teachers learn from these and how teacher learn, and in an effort to learn what the different aims of these approaches are. By definition, our mission is not committed to any approach to teacher education, nor to any outcome of teacher education. Our study could not be done by a center that was explicitly committed to fifth year programs or to reflective teaching, for no program with a different strategy or a different goal would be willing to allow us to study it. Yet, like researchers in the second center I described, researchers in the NCRTE are committed to a number of ideas. They are not lacking in views. And their views and commitments derive, in large part, from their practices as teacher educators.

Each of these mission statements has advantages and disadvantages. The first one emphasizes commitment more than detachment, and narrowly restricts the range of questions about which researchers may have detached curiosity. The fourth, conversely, opens the area of detached curiosity so wide that there is no area left about which members expressly share a commitment. Just as each statement of commitment delimits the range of content about which one can have detached curiosity, so each statement of detached curiosity limits the range of ideas about which one can be committed. This does not mean commitments disappear, of course, it only means that they cannot be expressed through the auspices of the center. Finally, the two mission statements in between offer ways of trying to roughly balance the demands of research with those of practice.
Summary

My assignment for this symposium was to examine the history and structure of my own center with an eye toward the lessons it might offer us. These lessons could have to do with the value of centers with respect to the intellectual progress of the field, or with the ways in which centers can enhance the interaction between research and practice. I examined a terrain much broader than my own center, but I did not extend beyond the system of federally-funded centers of which my center is a part. Briefly, I argued three points.

1. To the extent that one can justify a center over a collection of individual grantees, the justification usually has to do with the fact that centers can create a concentration of diverse researchers who, by virtue of working in the center must accommodate one another's perspectives. This coordinated and concentrated attention is particularly advantageous for attacking problems that are new, and hence do not have a standing cadre of researchers working on them; problems that are ill-defined and in need of concepts and paradigms to provide a framework for research; and problems that are multifaceted or complex and consequently need coordinated multidisciplinary attention. However, funding an institution that labels its work a "center" does not necessarily assure that these events will occur, nor is there solid evidence that any particular kinds of institutional arrangements will assure these events.

2. Arguments for connecting research to practice are based on different assumptions about why such a connection should occur and lead to different methods for making the connection. The available models range from, at one extreme, keeping the two activities completely separate, but funding special
linkers to carry knowledge from researchers to practitioners, to models that convert practitioners into researchers. Regardless of which model one adopts, connecting these two activities requires an uneasy tension between, on one hand, a commitment to ideals, and on the other detached curiosity. The task of a center that wishes to connect research and practice, therefore, is to find an optimal way of resolving this tension.

3. Through a series of hypothetical center missions, I delineated four different ways in which this tension could be resolved. One tilted the scale toward commitment, one toward detached curiosity, and two others tried for a more even balance. Most people who think of themselves as practitioners prefer resolutions that emphasize commitment, whereas people who think of themselves as researchers tend to prefer resolutions that emphasize detached curiosity. In fact, there is no one best way to resolve this tension. Each resolution has certain disadvantages, and each is also useful for particular purposes.