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# Redefining the Paradigm

*Faculty Models  
to Support Student Learning*

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**Creating the Connected Institution: Towards Realizing Benjamin Franklin's and Ernest Boyer's Revolutionary Vision for American Higher Education**

**Boyer Award Lecture 2015  
Washington, D.C.  
January 23, 2015**

**Ira Harkavy**

**Associate Vice President and Founding Director of the Barbara and Edward Netter Center for Community Partnerships,  
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Both the University of Pennsylvania's founder Benjamin Franklin and the great American pragmatic philosopher John Dewey emphasized that education and the schooling system, more than economics, politics, or anything else, primarily determine the character of a society. As Franklin wrote in 1750 "... nothing is of more importance to the public weal, than to form and train up youth in wisdom and virtue. Wise and good men are, in my opinion, the *strength* of a state: much more so than riches or arms, which, under the management of Ignorance and Wickedness, often draw on destruction, instead of providing for the safety of a people" (Franklin, 1962, p. 162-164.)

This belief that education—that what and how we teach and learn—shapes a society and its future was also an animating idea for Ernest Boyer. For him, education was the foundation of democracy itself:

We saw that if we hoped to build a democracy, we needed to have an education that was broad-based, and we determined it had to be universal. Every one of our Founding Fathers knew that if we wanted to move toward a government that was run by the people, they had to be enlightened. Surely, they have to work; surely, they have to be responsible as producers as well as consumers. But the larger purpose of education in this country is always driven by the fact that we need people to be civically engaged, intellectually and educationally well informed, or else we were opening the doors to tyranny (Novak, 1995).

Franklin's proposal to establish a college in Philadelphia was, as I will discuss momentarily, unique among colonial colleges because of its focus on education for service rooted in the values of the Enlightenment, not religion. He also understood, however, that colleges were institutions that had other impacts; and he appealed for support for his proposal by also emphasizing the significant

economic benefits it would bring to the city. Using current terminology, Franklin, in effect, saw the college functioning as an anchor institution for Philadelphia.

For Boyer, colleges and universities also had broad societal functions, with "more intellectual resources than any other institution in our culture" (Boyer, 1994). Boyer, in effect, would agree with Harvard's President Derek Bok when he identified "the modern university as the central institution in post-industrial society" (Bok, 1990, p. 3).

The beliefs that education and schooling significantly determine the character of a society and that higher education has broad societal impacts, including helping to shape the rest of the schooling system, lead logically to the core idea that unites Franklin's and Boyer's work and serves as the basis of their revolutionary vision for higher education. That core idea, simply put, is this: The primary purpose of higher education is service to society for the progressive betterment of the human condition. And to realize that purpose, Franklin in 1749 and Boyer 245 years later, in 1994, each wrote, in effect, proposals to create the New American College.

In 1749, Benjamin Franklin drafted his *Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania*, which described the purposes and curriculum of the "Academy of Philadelphia," later named the University of Pennsylvania, "as consisting in an *Inclination* join'd with an *Ability* to serve Mankind, one's Country, Friends and Family" (Franklin, 1962, p. 150). While Franklin founded Penn as an Enlightenment-inspired secular institution to educate students in a variety of fields, the other colonial colleges were largely created to educate ministers and religiously orthodox men capable of creating good communities built on religious denominational principles. Deliberately unaffiliated with any religious denomination, and therefore radically differing from existing institutions of higher education in America or Europe, the College of Philadelphia was dedicated to the advancement of scientific learning and knowledge for the benefit of humanity.

While Boyer, a 1948 graduate of Messiah Bible College (now Messiah College), an evangelical Christian college, had a radically different religious orientation from the Deist Franklin, he could not have agreed more with Franklin's view that American higher education had a social mission. And for Boyer, that mission specifically was realizing America's founding democratic purpose. In 1994 in his extraordinarily influential "Creating the New American College," he wrote: "Higher education and the larger purposes of American society have been—from the very first—inextricably intertwined" (Boyer, 1994, p. A48).

The history of American higher education strongly supports Boyer's claim.

I have already briefly described the civic purpose of colonial colleges. That purpose became even more prominent in the 19th century. Service to society and fulfilling America's democratic mission were the founding purposes of the land-

grant universities. Established by the Morrill Act of 1862, land grant colleges and universities were designed to spread education, advance democracy, and improve the mechanical, agricultural, and military sciences. The spirit of the Morrill Act was perhaps best expressed at the University of Wisconsin, which designed programs around the educational needs of adult citizens across the state.

In 1912, Charles McCarthy, a graduate of the University of Wisconsin and the first legislative reference librarian in the United States, coined the phrase "The Wisconsin Idea" to describe a concept that had been in practice for a number of years. The Wisconsin Idea's goal was to make "the boundaries of the university ... the boundaries of the state" (Stark, 1995, p. 1-2). When asked what accounted for the great progressive reforms that spread across the Midwest in the first two decades of the 20th century, McCarthy replied, a union of "soil and seminar" (Maxwell, 1956, p. 147-148). McCarthy's answer captures the essence of the Wisconsin Idea—focusing academic resources on improving the life of the farmer and the lives of citizens across the entire state.

The private urban research universities founded in the late 19th century also made service to community and society a central goal. In 1876, Daniel Coit Gilman in his inaugural address as the first president of Johns Hopkins, the first modern research university in the United States, expressed the hope that universities should "make for less misery among the poor, less ignorance in the schools, less bigotry in the temple, less suffering in the hospitals, less fraud in business, less folly in politics" (Long Jr., 1992, p. 184). Following Gilman's lead, the abiding belief in the democratic purposes of the American research university echoed throughout higher education at the turn of the twentieth century. In 1899, the University of Chicago's first president, William Rainey Harper, characterized the university as the "prophet of democracy" and its "to-be-expected deliverer" (Harper, 1905, p. 19, 12). And in 1908, Charles W. Eliot, the president of Harvard proclaimed: "At bottom most of the American institutions of higher education are filled with the democratic spirit of serviceableness. Teachers and students alike are profoundly moved by the desire to serve the democratic community" (Veysey, 1970, p. 119).

University presidents of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, during the so-called Progressive Era, worked to develop the American research university into a major national institution capable of meeting the needs of a rapidly changing and increasingly complex society. Imbued with boundless optimism and a belief that knowledge could change the world for the better, these captains of erudition envisioned universities as leading the way toward a more effective, humane, and democratic society for Americans in general and residents of the city in particular. Progressive academics also viewed

the city as their arena for study and action. Practicing what today would be called engaged scholarship, they seized the opportunity to advance knowledge, teaching, and learning by working to improve the quality of life in American cities experiencing the traumatic effects of industrialization, immigration, and large-scale urbanization.

As the statements from presidents Gilman and Harper in particular indicate, the idea that universities have the potential to be powerful resources for solving highly complex urban and metropolitan problems is longstanding. Engaged scholarship largely vanished, however, from the academy after 1918. World War I was the catalyst for a full-scale retreat from action-oriented, reformist social science. The brutality and horror of that conflict ended the buoyant optimism and faith in human progress and societal improvement that had marked the Progressive Era.

Indeed, despair led many social scientists to turn to a narrow scientific approach. "Sociology as a science is not interested in making the world a better place in which to live, in encouraging beliefs, in spreading information, in dispensing news, in setting forth impressions of life, in leading the multitudes or in guiding the ship of state," University of Chicago sociologist William F. Ogburn declared in his 1929 presidential address to the American Sociological Society. "Science is interested directly in one thing only, to wit, discovering new knowledge" (Bulmer, 1984, p. 182).

What the sociologist Robert Nisbet termed a "Seventy-Five Years War" helped keep American institutions of higher education focused on global, as opposed to local, concerns. In 1997, my colleague Lee Benson put it this way:

In the decades after World Wars I and II, American higher eds... increasingly concentrated on essentially scholastic, inside-the-Academy, problems and conflicts rather than on the very hard, very complex problems involved in helping American society realize the democratic promise of American life for all Americans. As a result, they increasingly abandoned the public mission and societal engagement that had powerfully, productively inspired and energized them during their pre-World War I formative period of great intellectual growth and development (Harkavy, 1999, p. 14).

The 1960s did see something of a return of higher education working with their neighbors. From 1965-1968, the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, under the leadership of John Gardner, provided hundreds of millions of dollars to universities to develop projects and programs with their

cities and communities. During the same period and into the 1970s, the Ford Foundation made a similar investment to higher educational institutions. Unfortunately, these funds did not produce the desired result. Treating urban and metropolitan engagement as a mere add-on, colleges and universities applied little, if any, effort to changing their core teaching and research functions. They resisted making the internal changes needed to work effectively with government, foundations, and other organizations and contribute to the improvement of their local communities and cities.

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War in 1989 had a profound impact on creating a climate that encouraged democratic community engagement. The emergence of a new type of college and university is perhaps most credibly explained, however, as a response to the poverty, physical deterioration, crime and violence of the American city. Moreover, the problems of the American city were often visible in the very shadows of higher educational institutions, affecting these institutions' ability to recruit and retain faculty and students. After the Cold War ended, the situation became increasingly obvious (and obviously immoral) and troubling. In short, after 1989 the combination of external pressure and enlightened self-interest spurred an increasing number of American higher educational institutions to begin to engage democratically with their local communities.

Since that time, something like a higher education democratic civic and community engagement movement (a movement that New American Colleges & Universities is part of and has helped to shape) has developed across the United States and around the world to better educate students for democratic citizenship and to improve schooling and the quality of life. Service-learning, community-based participatory research, volunteer projects, institutional investment and support, as you all know, are some of the means that have been used to create mutually beneficial partnerships designed to make a profound difference in the community and on the campus.

Over the past two and a half decades, the academic benefits of community engagement have also been illustrated in practice—and the intellectual case for engagement effectively made by leading scholars and educators, including Ernest Boyer, as well as John Gardner, Derek Bok, and the University of Pennsylvania's president, Amy Gutmann. That case can be briefly summarized as follows: When institutions of higher education give very high priority to actively solving real-world problems in and with their communities, a much greater likelihood exists that they will significantly advance learning, research, teaching, and service and thereby simultaneously reduce barriers to the development of mutually beneficial, higher education-community partnerships. More specifically, by focusing on

solving universal problems that are manifested in their local communities (such as poverty, poor schooling, inadequate healthcare), institutions of higher education will generate knowledge that is both nationally and globally significant and be better able to realize their primary mission of contributing to a healthy, democratic society.

In recent years, colleges and universities are being increasingly called on to do the right thing and engage with their communities, but in order for them to engage effectively, they must overcome the burden of tradition. In his attempt to create a new, innovative college in and for the New World of America, Franklin was keenly aware of that burden.

Soon after the college began operation in 1751, Franklin left Philadelphia on a variety of missions that essentially kept him in Europe for more than thirty years. During his long absence, the men who controlled and conducted the college were strongly committed, both in theory and in practice, to the traditional classical model. Nothing resembling Franklin's proposed radical reformation of higher education, therefore, was ever put into practice in Philadelphia. Shortly before he died in 1790, Franklin angrily denounced the Trustees of what by then had become the University of Pennsylvania for their conservative and destructive approach. Franklin explained their intellectual inertia by asserting: "there is in mankind an unaccountable prejudice in favor of ancient Customs and Habitues, which inclines to a Continuance of them after the Circumstances which formerly made them useful, cease to exist" (Reinhold, 1968, p. 224). A "prejudice in favor of ancient Customs and Habitues," in my judgment, continues to function as a primary obstacle to the radical transformation of colleges and universities into engaged, democratic, civic institutions.

Although a primary obstacle, it is by no means the only one. In my judgment, the forces of commercialism and commodification, misplaced nostalgia for "Ivory Towerish," traditionally elitist, traditional liberal arts, and intellectual and institutional fragmentation also function as significant obstacles to needed change. Let me briefly explain.

Education for profit, not virtue; students as consumers, not producers of knowledge; academics as individual superstars, not members of a community of scholars are all examples of the commercialization of higher education. Perhaps the most important consequence of the commercialization of higher education is the devastating impact it has on the values and ambitions of college students. When higher educational institutions openly and increasingly pursue commercialization, their behavior legitimizes and reinforces the pursuit of economic self-interest by students and contributes to the widespread sense that they are in college exclusively to gain career skills and credentials. Student

idealism and civic engagement are also strongly diminished when students see their universities abandon academic values and scholarly pursuits to function openly and enthusiastically as competitive, profit-making corporations. Commercialism also powerfully contributes to higher education being seen as a private benefit, instead of a public good.

In part as a response to galloping commercialism, some have made the case for a preservation of and/or return to traditional liberal arts education—an essentialist approach with roots in Plato's anti-democratic, elitist theory of education. Boyer's call for creating the New American College was, to a significant extent, also a call for, what Carol Schneider has termed, "a *new liberal art*" involving "integrative learning—focused around big problems and new connections between the academy and society [emphasis added]" (Schneider, 2005, p. 13). That concept is effectively expressed in NAC&U's description of the ideas celebrated by the Boyer Award: "Boyer's quest for a common learning, connecting theory to practice and thought to action, in and out of the classroom, continues to inspire The New American Colleges & Universities, as well as other colleges and universities throughout the country, to creatively integrate liberal and professional studies with community engagement" (The New American Colleges and Universities, 2010).

A 1982 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report entitled *The University and the Community* claimed, "Communities have problems, universities have departments" (Center for Educational Research and Innovation, 1982, p. 127).

Beyond being a criticism of universities, that statement neatly indicates another major reason why colleges and universities have not contributed as they should. Quite simply, their unintegrated, fragmented, internally conflictual structure and organization impede understanding and developing solutions to highly complex human and societal problems. Colleges and universities need to significantly decrease the fragmentation of disciplines, overspecialization, and division between and among the arts and sciences and professions, since these departmental and disciplinary divisions have increased the isolation of higher education from society itself.

So what is to be done to reduce the negative effects of the dead hand of dysfunctional traditions, as well as commercialism and commodification, "Ivory Tower nostalgia," and intellectual and institutional fragmentation? To help answer that question, I turn to one of John Dewey's most significant propositions: "Democracy must begin at home, and its home is the neighborly community" (Dewey, 1954, p. 213). Democracy, Dewey emphasized, has to be built on face-to-face interactions in which human beings work together cooperatively to solve

the ongoing problems of life. In effect, I am updating Dewey and advocating this proposition: Democracy must begin at home, and its home is the engaged neighborly college or university and its local community partners.

The benefits of a local community focus for college and university civic engagement programs are manifold. Ongoing, continuous, interaction is facilitated through work in an easily accessible location. Relationships of trust, so essential for effective partnerships and effective learning, are also built through day-to-day work on problems and issues of mutual concern. In addition, the local community provides a convenient setting in which a number of service-learning courses, community-based research courses, and related courses in different disciplines can work together on a complex problem to produce substantive results. Work in a university's local community, since it facilitates interaction across schools and disciplines, can also create interdisciplinary learning opportunities. And finally, the local community is a democratic real-world learning site in which community members and academics can pragmatically determine whether the work is making a real difference, and whether both the neighborhood and the higher education institution are better as a result of common efforts. Indeed, I would contend that a focus on local engagement is an extraordinarily promising strategy for realizing institutional mission and purpose. Or as elegantly expressed by Paul Pribbenow, President of Augsburg College, the "intersections of vocation and location" provide wonderful opportunities for both the institution and the community (Pribbenow, 2014, p. 158).

In his 1749 proposal to establish a college, Franklin called for local engagement, making the extraordinarily radical suggestion for the times that students visit and learn from "neighbouring Plantations of the best Farmers" (Franklin, 1962, p. 148). And Boyer, of course, placed local community engagement at the very center of his 1994 proposal to create a New American College. In a paragraph focused on the responsibility of higher education to help solve significant urban problems (in which he kindly quotes me), Boyer wrote: "And what about our cities? Urban America is where the nation's fabric is now experiencing its most serious strain. Violence, unemployment, poverty, poor housing, and pollution often occur at the very doorsteps of some of our most distinguished colleges and universities. How can the nation's campuses stay disengaged? Ira Harkavy ... warns that "universities cannot afford to remain shores of affluence, self-importance, and horticultural beauty at the edge of island seas of squalor, violence, and despair" (Boyer, 1994, p. A48).

To support the Franklin-Boyer position, I turn to the example I know best—Penn's work with West Philadelphia, a largely disadvantaged area of approximately 200,000 people.

Since 1985, the university has increasingly engaged in comprehensive and mutually beneficial university-community-school partnerships. Coordinated by the Barbara and Edward Netter Center for Community Partnerships, more than 200 Academically Based Community Service (ABCS) courses (Penn's approach to service-learning) have been developed. ABCS courses integrate research, teaching, learning, and service around action-oriented, community problem-solving. Penn students work on improving local schools, spurring economic development on a neighborhood scale, and building strong community organizations. At the same time, they reflect on their service experience and its larger implications (e.g., why poverty, racism, and crime exist). In 2013-2014, approximately 1800 Penn students (undergraduate, graduate, and professional) and more than 50 faculty members (from 26 departments across nine of Penn's 12 schools) were engaged in West Philadelphia through 65 ABCS courses. (This represents significant growth since 1992, when three faculty members taught four ABCS courses to approximately 100 students.)

At the core of many of Penn's Academically Based Community Service courses are ongoing faculty action research projects. For example, in 1991, Professor and then-chair of the anthropology department Dr. Francis Johnston revised his undergraduate seminar on medical anthropology to focus on community health in West Philadelphia. Over the past twenty-four years, students in this course, as well as Johnston's other courses, have addressed the strategic problem of improving the health and nutrition of disadvantaged inner-city children by doing systematic in-depth research designed to understand and help improve the education and nutritional status of youth in West Philadelphia. Professor Johnston, whose work had previously largely concerned nutritional problems in Latin America, found that his seminars on West Philadelphia were not only more enjoyable to teach, but they also contributed to his own scholarly research.

To carry out the nutrition project, which in 2007 was named the Agatston Urban Nutrition Initiative (AUNI) thanks to a gift from Arthur and Sari Agatston (parents of a Penn alumnus), it is necessary for Penn undergraduates and public school students to collect, organize, and interpret a relatively large and complex body of data directly relevant to Johnston's longstanding research interests. The data that he and the students have produced has become the main basis of a series of peer-reviewed articles and presentations at scientific meetings, as well as a book *The Obesity Culture*, which I co-authored with Professor Johnston in 2009 (Johnston & Harkavy, 2009). Currently, faculty members in political science, psychology, nursing, the Wharton School, as well as some of Johnston's colleagues in anthropology, teach and have research projects connected to AUNI—16

courses this past academic year—which has become the Netter Center's largest project with over 20 full-time employees working in university-assisted community schools in West Philadelphia, as well as in other sections of the city.

The Access Science program further exemplifies the reciprocal, democratic partnerships that Penn is developing through academic partnerships with the West Philadelphia community. Begun in 1999 with initial support from the National Science Foundation, Access Science works to improve science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education of both K-12 students and undergraduate and graduate students at Penn. Renamed Moelis Access Science in 2006 to acknowledge a gift from Ron and Kerry Moelis, a Penn alumnus and his spouse, the program involves faculty and students from across numerous Penn departments—including biology, mathematics, environmental science, physics, education, chemistry, engineering, and computer science—working in local West Philadelphia public schools. Student fellows provide content-based professional development for teachers and direct classroom support for implementing quality hands-on laboratory exercises and small group activities. Approximately a dozen Academically Based Community Service courses related to the program are now offered each year.

For example, "Community Physics Initiative" is an ABCS course taught by Dr. Larry Gladney, the Associate Dean for the Natural Sciences and recent chair of the Department of Physics and Astronomy, that links the practical and theoretical aspects of fundamental physics and is aligned with the School District of Philadelphia's curriculum for introductory high school physics. By creating and teaching weekly laboratory exercises and classroom demonstrations at a nearby high school, Penn students are learning science by teaching science to high school students while making contributions to physics education research and practice.

While an assistant in Penn's Wharton School, W.E.B. Du Bois in his 1899 classic *The Philadelphia Negro* wrote that the purpose of his research was to "serve as the scientific basis of further study, and of practical reform" (Du Bois, 1899/1996, p. 4). Both Johnston's work with the Agatston Urban Nutrition Initiative and Gladney's work with Moelis Access Science highlight the benefits to scholarship and society that result when research and teaching are focused on solving local school and community problems.

The Netter Center has also been working for over 20 years on the idea of university-assisted community schools. Community schools bring together multiple organizations and their resources to educate, activate, and serve not just students but all members of the community in which the school is located. This idea essentially extends and updates a theory John Dewey developed

from his close association with Jane Addams and other Hull House settlement workers struggling to improve the quality of life for the immigrant residents of the poverty-stricken Chicago neighborhood in which Hull House was located. Jane Addams in Chicago and Lillian Wald in New York City, as well as other socially concerned, feminist settlement house workers, recognizing that though there were very few settlement houses, there were very many public schools, pioneered the transfer of social, health, cultural, and recreational services to public schools of major U.S. cities at the turn of the twentieth century.

Inspired by their innovative ideas and impressed by their practical community activities, John Dewey in 1902 presented a highly influential and prophetic address, "The School as Social Centre," in which he described his theory that the neighborhood school can function as the core neighborhood institution—the one that provides comprehensive services, galvanizes other community institutions and groups, and helps solve the myriad problems communities confront in a rapidly changing world. Dewey recognized that if the neighborhood school were to function as a genuine community center, it would require additional human resources and support. But to my knowledge, he never identified universities as a key source of broadly based, sustained, comprehensive support for community schools. My colleagues and I emphasize "university-assisted" because we have become convinced that universities, indeed "higher eds" in general, are uniquely well-positioned to provide strategic, comprehensive and sustained support for community schools.

University-assisted community schools engage students, grades pre-K through 20, in real-world community problem-solving designed to have positive effects on neighborhoods and help develop active, participating citizens of a democratic society. University-assisted community school programs occur during the school day, after school, evenings, Saturdays, and summers. Penn students taking ABCS courses (such as Johnston's and Gladney's courses that I have just described), work-study students, and student interns and volunteers (a total of 2,400 students in all) provide vital support for these programs, serving as tutors, mentors, classroom fellows, or activity and project leaders. The Netter Center is working with a network of five university-assisted community schools in West Philadelphia, involving approximately 4,000 K-12 children, youth, and their families each year.

It is important to emphasize that the university-assisted community schools now being developed at Penn and elsewhere—such as Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, Florida International University, Johns Hopkins University, Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, Seattle University, University at Buffalo, University of California-Los Angeles, University of Connecticut, University of Dayton, University of Maryland-Baltimore, University of New Mexico-Albuquerque, University of Tennessee-Knoxville, and

Widener University—have a long way to go before they can fully mobilize the powerful, untapped resources of their own institutions and of their communities, including those found among individual neighbors and in local institutions (such as businesses, social service agencies, faith-based organizations, and hospitals). This will require, among other things, more effective coordination of governmental and nonprofit funding streams and services. How to conceive that profound organizational change, let alone bring it about, poses extraordinarily complex intellectual and social challenges.

With its focus on how to make connections between and among various organizations and individuals, it is a problem tailor made for the New American College called for by Boyer. At its core, the New American College is, as Boyer wrote, "a connected institution ... committed to improving, in a very intentional way, the human condition" (Boyer, 1994, p. A48). Developing and connecting knowledge to the world for human betterment was, as I have discussed, also central to Franklin.

"Only connect!" the powerful evocative epigraph in E.M. Forster's classic novel *Howard's End*, captures the essence of Franklin's and Boyer's strategy for change. "The scholarship of engagement," Boyer wrote, "means connecting the rich resources of the university to our most pressing social, civic and ethical problems, to our children, to our schools, to our teachers and to our cities... Campuses would be viewed by both students and professors not only as isolated islands, but as staging grounds for action" (Boyer, 1996, p. 19-20).

To conclude and highlight a primary theme of my talk, by focusing on solving universal problems that are manifested in their local communities, institutions of higher learning will be better able to reduce the "ancient customs and habitudes" impeding college and university community engagement, advance research, teaching, learning, and service, and better realize Benjamin Franklin's and Ernest Boyer's revolutionary vision for higher education of active engagement and service. I am convinced that if American higher education realizes that revolutionary vision, American society will be able to realize the revolutionary founding democratic promise of America for each and every American.

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