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*University outreach in the 1990s is being viewed with fresh eyes. What once occupied a marginal position at many colleges and universities is now much closer to the institutional center. What can be learned from the experiences associated with the first generation of change? Higher education seems to be traveling along four change paths. Each of these paths represents a way for outreach to add value to institutional identity and capacity. Pervasive (even transformative) change is possible when outreach is connected to students' academic programs, with research, and through problem-focused interdisciplinary scholarship. To ensure long-term success, institutions must become proficient at embedding change permanently in organizational culture.*

## **First Generation Outcomes of the Outreach Movement: Many Voices, Multiple Paths**

Historically, continuing education and extension have occupied marginal status in the higher education community. These functions are often classified as service work and frequently organized and administered in nonacademic units. In the early 1990s, this picture began to change. In what might be classified as the first generation of an emerging outreach movement, institutional innovators designed and launched change efforts. Some innovators envisioned a rebirth of the university, with outreach becoming the engine of change. Others saw outreach as an opportunity for institutional reform with the goal of making higher education increasingly relevant to society.

Academic institutions have traveled multiple change paths. Four paths (see Table 1) are identified and discussed here. These paths, which often cross or blend as hybrid forms in institutional practice, represent distinct approaches to change. They differ in terms of the ends sought, the means used, and the extent to which the change was designed to affect core institutional domains (e.g., resource reallocations made and changes in the faculty reward system).

Table 1. Four Paths of Institutional Change

Points of Comparison:	<i>Establishing Outreach Pillars of Excellence</i>	<i>Realigning the Mission with Outreach in Mind</i>	<i>Institutional Restructuring Driven by Outreach</i>	<i>Making Outreach the Overarching Dimension</i>
Specific outcome sought	Establish excellence in a select set of priority areas	Seek balance and connections across the mission dimensions	Enable the university to better address constituency needs and meet their expectations	Establish a new "institutional signature"
Primary means used	Nurture institutional points of distinction, often in partnership with nonacademic collaborators	Increase quantity and quality of effort, as well as promote outcomes that have impact	Redesign structures and functions to enhance efficiency and effectiveness	Organize institutional structures and functions around the "new signature"
Resource reallocations made	Target investments and resource shifts	Target investments and resource shifts	Significantly reallocate resources	Significantly reallocate resources
Changes made in the faculty reward system	Possible, but not likely	Adjustments likely, but may not be significant changes	Extensive changes possible	Extensive changes

## **Four Change Paths**

### ***Establishing Outreach Pillars of Excellence***

Creating outreach-focused institutes, centers, and programs is a way of promoting outreach without engaging in institution-wide change. These units become pillars of excellence when they become “signature units” for an institution, its way of demonstrating a commitment to the needs of external constituents. They may respond to unmet, but routine, requests for training or applied research or they may engage in cutting-edge work, including outreach-research and outreach-teaching efforts. In either case, a unit’s work is likely to be focused in terms of problem addressed (e.g., nonprofit management), constituency base (e.g., school administrators), and products and services offered (e.g., continuing professional education). In terms of financial support, a unit may be funded partially through the institution’s general fund, although foundation and corporate support may be sought at the start-up phase. External grant/contract activity, fees-for-service, and other entrepreneurial efforts are often used to maintain and expand the scope of unit operations. Some or all of the work undertaken may be done in partnership with the public, private, or nonprofit sectors; and staff members (some of whom may hold primary appointments in the partnering organizations) may or may not hold faculty rank or joint appointments in academic units. Leinsing et al. (1997) describe a pillar of excellence in teacher education that has been established at Stetson University.

Although this path is, in many respects, the easiest route associated with the outreach movement, it is not without its challenges. Perhaps the major pitfall is to avoid creating service structures that are “treated differently,” that is, largely disconnected from an institution’s academic mission and functions, reward system, and budget allocation process. Because “moving outreach from the margin to the mainstream” may well be the anthem of the outreach movement, it is imperative to establish vibrant, two-way connections with other major campus functions. For example, outreach units can be organized as matrix structures to encourage faculty participants to connect their outreach efforts with work they are doing in their home academic units.

### ***Realigning the Institutional Mission with Outreach in Mind***

The words “with outreach in mind” are important ones. Realignment is often a response to an organization’s decision to more fully engage its external constituents and confront the misalignment of institutional practices with institutional mission. Consequently, the goal is to realign institutional practice so that outreach is more in balance with and better connected to teaching and research as defined by the institution’s understanding of its mission.

Change is often undertaken through structural and/or functional integration. Structural integration occurs when outreach programs are moved from autonomous units and become part of the normal and typical work of academic units. Functional integration takes place when outreach attains equal footing with teaching and research, which itself occurs when outreach efforts are included and valued in making annual review, promotion, and tenure decisions.

Realignments may or may not affect the institution as a whole, depending on the strategic choices made by its leadership. Institutions considering realignment efforts may choose to focus on one or more parts of campus that are perceived to need attention or seem ripe for innovation. In these cases, selective investments, rather than broad-scale resource reallocations, are likely to be made. For example, incremental change may occur, such as experimenting with one or more targeted unit(s) with the idea of learning from experience and then diffusing positive approaches across campus. Or more sweeping, larger-scale, institution-wide changes may be undertaken, such as when an institution revises campus-wide faculty evaluation procedures to achieve greater balance across the mission dimensions of teaching, research, and service.

Michigan State University's efforts over the past ten years is one example of an institution that has been involved in realigning its mission with outreach in mind. MSU has explored the implications of conceiving outreach as a scholarly activity (Provost's Committee on University Outreach, 1993), identifying standards of quality that apply to outreach (Sandmann, 1996), and documenting faculty outreach efforts (see Driscoll and Lynton, in press).

### ***Institutional Restructuring that is Outreach-Driven***

This approach to change involves making significant adjustments in institutional organization and practices. This restructuring is a product of the organizational redesign process, which on some campuses means eliminating or combining units. Restructuring often requires a significant financial investment and frequently involves significant shifts in the lines of responsibility for budget management. Major adjustments are often made in functions, as well as in structures. For example, changes in the faculty reward system are often associated with restructuring. It is also recognized that unless resource allocations, other incentives, and rewards align with the restructured functions, it is unlikely that restructuring will produce anticipated results.

It is wise to perceive restructuring as a connective, not as a mechanical, process. Changing structures (and corresponding functions) often yields significant institutional change—sometimes in unanticipated, and even unwanted, ways. One strategy for reducing the likelihood of making ill-advised restructuring decisions is to preface taking action with study and discussion phases. Institutions have benefited from white papers authored by distinguished faculty members, e.g., at Oregon State University (Castle, 1993) and by “blue ribbon” committees, e.g., at Michigan State University (Provost's Committee on University Outreach, 1993). Studying change gives faculty and administrative leaders the time and opportunity to consider and evaluate change alternatives within the broader context of the campus culture. It is worthwhile to seek the input of various constituencies (on campus and off) during the study process. Broad-based discussion of the assessment and recommendations is also encouraged before taking action.

### ***Positioning Outreach as the Overarching Mission Dimension***

Attempting to transform an entire institution is a daunting task. It often comes in response to an institutional crisis or in situations where proactive change is seen as a means to enhance the prospects of maintaining institutional viability. An institution

that seeks to position outreach as the overarching mission dimension typically does so for one of two reasons. First, it may want to occupy an unfilled market niche that distinguishes it from neighboring institutions (e.g., as a means to attract new sources of political support and funding). Or the institution may want to distinguish itself as a partner in the development of the local community, region, or state. Portland State University (see Ramaley, 1996, 1997) is an example of an institution that has sought to position outreach as an overarching mission dimension.

Institutions that chart this course need to pay attention to several preconditions. First, they need presidential and board leadership, persons who can articulate the need for institutional transformation and who have the energy and commitment to persevere in the face of pressures to retain old ways of doing business. These pressures come from students, faculty, alumni, political leaders, and other stakeholders who may perceive that they have something to lose if transformation occurs. Other potential barriers include faculty reward structures and institutional and public policies that serve as disincentives to change.

A second precondition is faculty support for change, their confidence in administrative leadership, and their tolerance for the change process. All three are important if an institution is to implement an overarching outreach mission. For example, faculty may endorse change in theory, but may also lack confidence in the ability of academic administrators to organize and facilitate the change process. Faculty members may support or impede change through governance structures.

A supportive faculty allows a president to focus his or her attention on cultivating allies among external constituencies, a final precondition for implementing an overarching outreach mission. This support can come in the form of financial resources from foundations, private donors, and other funding sources. Equally important is to build up and maintain the type of moral support (“we are doing the right thing”) that is required to sustain transformation over time. This is especially critical if administrative leadership changes before the overarching outreach mission is fully implemented.

### **Implications**

What implications are associated with the first generation outcomes of the outreach movement? First, a heterogeneous group of institutions, public and private, seems to be incorporating outreach in rhetoric, organization, and practice. Because of this, public and private designations or Carnegie classifications may not be very useful in explaining who is doing what, where, and how. Second, outreach appears to be gaining status in institutions that have not always viewed outreach as a core mission dimension. Having “discovered” outreach, new institutional means and mechanisms are being established—vehicles that make it possible to improve current practices and/or accomplish new ends. And third, new and exciting connections are being forged through outreach across the teaching, research, and service functions. When this happens, outreach becomes more than an institution’s “third mission.” It becomes a vibrant connecting rod, linking outreach with students’ academic programs, linking outreach with research, linking disciplines and professions through outreach, and linking campus with field.

## **Speculating about the Future**

What might we expect to see happen in the longer term? Three outcomes seem to be emerging as a result of the first wave of change.

### ***Incorporating Outreach into Faculty Evaluation and Reward Processes***

Perhaps the most critical challenge is to move beyond smaller-scale experimentation to broader-scale applications, across disciplines and professions as well as across institutions. Work being undertaken by the American Association of Higher Education and The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching offers important insights into how this work might proceed. As part of AAHE's Forum on Faculty Roles and Rewards, Ernest Lynton (1995) discussed outreach work in the context of attributes of scholarship. He argued that scholarly activity in outreach is distinguished by the way that scholars put singular instances and projects into broader, interpretive perspective. If approached in this manner, scholars will be able to respond to specific requests for assistance and, at the same time, advance professional understanding and capacity.

The Carnegie Foundation recently published the results of research conducted on assessing the quality of scholarly activity (Glassick et al., 1997). The research revealed that irrespective of scholarship form—discovery, integration, application, or learning—all forms of academic work appear to follow and share a common sequence of elements and stages. The stages include establishing clear goals, preparing adequately, using appropriate methods, obtaining significant results, communicating the results effectively, and engaging in reflective critique.

Other standards for planning and assessing forms of scholarship, as well as for documenting and presenting scholarly work, are being developed at a number of institutions, including the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (Farmer and Schomberg, 1993) and the University of Wisconsin-Madison (Council on Outreach, 1997). Outreach portfolios are one means of making scholarship available for peer review and evaluation (see Driscoll and Lynton, in press).

### ***Advancing the Scholarship of Outreach***

Just as there is a scholarship of teaching and learning—a knowledge base with informed practices associated with how learners learn and how teaching is best organized and undertaken—there is also a scholarship of outreach. Along this line, there appears to be considerable interest in learning from outreach experiences and sharing what has been learned with scholars and practitioners. Higher education institutions also want outreach to be scholarly in nature because it helps connect outreach to other forms of scholarship and enhances the prospects of producing quality results that have impact. For example, in seven New England institutions that have espoused strong institutional support for outreach it was found that faculty participating in outreach were expected to articulate the intrinsic relationship between their outreach activities and their teaching and research efforts (Singleton et al., 1997).

The scholarship of outreach also offers an opportunity to advance common understanding among diverse professional and disciplinary groups. For example, health

professionals, environmental engineers, and teacher-educators may find that they have much to learn from each other about how to work collaboratively with community audiences—even though each group addresses different types of societal problems.

Fortunately, a considerable amount of work associated with the scholarship of outreach is underway, despite the fact that it is rarely labeled as such. For example, efforts are well along at the University of Michigan–Ann Arbor to embed community service learning in undergraduate, graduate, and graduate-professional curricula and to engage faculty and students from across campus in advancing the art and science of community service learning. To share the scholarly results of their work, a multidisciplinary faculty network publishes a book series and edits a professional journal (see, for example, Howard, 1993).

Another example of the scholarship of outreach is the way in which the research-outreach connection is being reconceptualized and practiced. Take for instance the collection of articles in a recent issue of *Change* (1997) organized around the theme, “Higher Education: Rebuilding the Civic Life.” One of the featured approaches is a form of outreach-research called participatory research. In participatory research, universities work collaboratively with the public on issues that are relevant for people.

### ***Developing Greater Proficiency for Engaging in Institutional Change***

Considerable literature exists on strategies associated with achieving and sustaining large-scale institutional change (e.g., Kotter, 1996). Some of this literature focuses on bringing about change in higher education settings (e.g., Dolence and Norris, 1995; Sinnot and Johnson, 1996). The work at Portland State University represents one example where change efforts were grounded in the scholarship of large-scale change. Then-president Judith Ramaley and other PSU administrators interpreted and applied Heifetz’s (1993) change model to design a transformational change effort. That effort is described and interpreted—from organizing for change to reinforcing and sustaining change—in Ramaley (1996).

Another example of a literature-informed approach is found at Michigan’s Olivet College, a small liberal arts institution. Under the leadership of then-president Michael Bassis, Olivet drew extensively from the service learning literature during the process of redefining the purpose of an undergraduate education. “Education for individual and social responsibility” became the overarching characteristic, and the college earmarked a significant portion of its scholarships for high school students with demonstrated commitment to fellow citizens.

## **Unresolved Issues**

At least three issues need to be taken into consideration as the outreach movement evolves and matures. First, the change models being used to guide institutional change need to be documented and shared. In an ocean of potential directions and approaches, an informed understanding of what was done (and why) is crucial. Second, we know that organizational change rarely unfolds as planned. There are fits and starts, detours, and exit ramps. Because of that, complete and unfettered change stories are required, recognizing that there is as much to learn—perhaps more—from situations

that did not turn out exactly as expected. Third, we need to track change over an extended period of time. We know that factors exogenous to a change model (e.g., campus economics) can influence the course of change. We also need to better understand the impact of change initiators on longer-term change. For example, is change led by charismatic leaders more or less difficult to embed in the campus culture?

### Closing Observations

As Madeline Green (1997) writes:

“higher education...is a product of forces far larger than itself and can only carve out its future in the context of these forces.” Because outreach is an important vehicle by which academic institutions respond to societal needs, the contemporary expression of interest in outreach is a healthy sign. Hopefully, the interest will continue, making it possible for this historically “at the margins” function to influence the course of higher education in the future.

### Suggested Readings

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## Call for Contributions

*Metropolitan Universities* continues to welcome the submission of unsolicited manuscripts on topics pertinent to our eponymous institutions. We seek contributions that analyze and discuss pertinent policy issues, innovative programs or projects, new organizational and procedural approaches, pedagogic developments, and other matters of importance to the mission of metropolitan universities.

Articles of approximately 3,500 words should be intellectually rigorous but need not be cast in the traditional scholarly format nor based on original research. They should be *useful* to their audience, providing better understanding as well as guidance for action. Descriptions of interesting innovations should point out the implications for other institutions and the pitfalls to be avoided. Discussions of broad issues should cite examples and suggest specific steps to be taken. We also welcome manuscripts that, in a reasoned and rigorous fashion, are *provocative*, challenging readers to re-examine traditional definitions, concepts, policies, and procedures.

We would also welcome letters to the editor, as well as opinion pieces for our forum pages. Individuals interested in contributing an article pertaining to the thematic portion of a forthcoming issue, or writing on any of the many other possible subjects, are encouraged to send a brief outline to either the appropriate guest editor (addresses available from the executive editor) or to the executive editor. Letters and opinion pieces should be sent directly to the latter:

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