

Community Engagement Through Partnerships—A Primer

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Abstract

As more and more institutions look outside the campus walls for opportunities to serve their surrounding communities, a need has grown for guidance in developing true partnerships. There is no template that can be applied to campus-community partnerships. Each situation will be different and require different strategies, but a look at some basic tenets of community engagement seen through the prism of a new campus-community partnership being developed in Worcester, Massachusetts may provide guidance to individuals and institutions seeking to engage the campus with the community. Common threads throughout the discussion are open and honest communication among the partners and a recognition that resources and knowledge reside on and off the campus.

The dramatic growth of what is described as “engaged institutions of higher education” in the past twenty-five years is a familiar phenomenon. While the noted educational historian at the University of Pennsylvania, Dr. Ira Harkavy, will point out that the concept of community engagement goes back to the very beginnings of American higher education (Harkavy 2003), I think it is agreed that the concept has gained new credibility and a dramatically enhanced visibility in recent years. Among American colleges and universities, the confluence of such diverse factors as the enlightened self-interest on the part of colleges and universities, a heightened sense of social consciousness on the part of a generation of faculty and students, and the timely and much needed infusion of funding from sources like the United States government and the philanthropic community have all contributed to what some have described as no less than a transformation within American higher education.

As this movement has gained momentum within the higher education community, it has been rewarding to see examples of engaged institutions coming not just from the major research and state-sponsored institutions but from two-year colleges; minority-based institutions; including Historically Black Colleges and Universities; small, liberal arts colleges; and technical and professional schools.

While examples from all these categories differ in size, resources, and mission, their commitment to community engagement is grounded in some common values and characteristics.

Basic Tenets, Values and Characteristics of an Engaged University

A number of tenets, values and characteristics come to mind when considering a description of an engaged university. A champion of community engagement, preferably the president, is vitally important if this effort is to be a part of the realized mission of a college or university. In recent history, presidents like Judith Ramaley at Portland State University, Judith Rodan at the University of Pennsylvania, and Evan Dohelle at Trinity University in Hartford, CT have charismatically led their respective universities in ways that fully engaged the resources of the academy with the surrounding community. Their programs served as models for a generation of campus leaders. In recent years new leaders have emerged, including John Bassett at Clark University in Worcester, MA, Eugene Trani at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, VA, and Nancy Zimpher, formerly of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and now President of the University of Cincinnati. All of these leaders understood the role of their institution in the community, eloquently articulated the vision of an engaged institution, and provided resources necessary to carry out the stated mission.

This enlightened leadership manifests itself on the campus in several ways. Flourishing in an environment established by these visionary leaders is an entrepreneurial faculty. These are faculty members who are willing to take risks, going outside traditional pedagogy, to involve their students in meaningful academic work beyond the traditional classroom. It is not a coincidence that service-learning or community-based learning has become a major part of the curriculum at institutions like the University of Pennsylvania, Portland State University, and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

The value an institution ascribes to community engagement can frequently be measured by the ease or difficulty with which faculty get involved in community engagement activities. While progress is being made, slowly but surely, to include an evaluation of a faculty member's community engagement activities in the overall institutional rewards system, many faculty members, especially junior faculty, find it difficult to devote time to anything but the traditional demands of academic responsibility, i.e., teaching, pure research, committee work, and publishing. Much has been written describing the valuable scholarship emanating from community-based research and community engagement initiatives (Silka 2006; Strand et al. 2003). Acceptance of this legitimate form of scholarship will strengthen an institution's commitment to community engagement.

An engaged institution will see beyond the "community as laboratory" with the attendant "citizen as subject or statistic" emphasis and see the community as a key partner in the learning process. This can require a radically different world view, one which requires a democratic view of the academy's relationship with the community that Harkavy describes as "the heart and soul of a successful partnership" (Harkavy 2006).

And finally, an engaged institution is accessible and will listen effectively to its constituents. Colleges, especially the larger institutions, can be perceived as impenetrable monoliths, inaccessible to the average non-student (and maybe to some students). An engaged institution will provide portals of entry to encourage access and promote dialogue. Brukardt, Holland, Percy, and Zimpher describe an on-going process that involves the community in a thoughtful and informed way to determine how best the academy can serve the community (Brukardt et al. 2004).

Integration of Partnerships in Community Engagement

A number of factors drive the values of an engaged university. It may be something as simple and direct as enlightened self-interest. The University of Pennsylvania may not have become the model of community engagement if it had not been forced to react to the blighted conditions surrounding the campus. It did react, however, and in ways that went beyond “bricks and mortar,” forging partnerships with institutions like the primary and secondary schools of West Philadelphia and building the capacity of nonprofit organizations in their abutting neighborhoods.

The rapid development of service-learning in higher education is also driving these values of community engagement. In the past twenty years community-based learning or service-learning has gained rapid and dramatic acceptance on college campuses. As greater numbers of faculty across all disciplines adopt this pedagogical style they are seeking opportunities outside the traditional classroom to engage their students in reflective learning opportunities. Credit must be given to Campus Compact for overseeing and nurturing the growth of service-learning and civic engagement at colleges and universities through the development of syllabi for forty-eight separate academic disciplines (Campus Compact 2007). It is in the search for practical applications of theoretical material that relationships are established and partnerships forged among college campuses and their partnering organizations.

A supportive environment established by visionary academic leaders and a growing acceptance of non-traditional learning methods has helped encourage an entrepreneurial approach by faculty. Faculty members address community issues in a problem-solving mode, providing partnering organizations with real answers and tangible end-products. In Worcester, faculty and their students work closely with governmental and non-governmental organizations, conducting research that informs public policy and producing outcomes that serve the general good.

Not the least of the “drivers” of the values of community engagement is a deep belief and appreciation for the democratic process. Simply put, engaging students with the community is the right thing to do. Community engagement is a way to bring the abundant resources of the campus to bear upon critical issues of the day. It is a means of building capacity in oft-times marginalized communities that have been without a voice on issues that impact directly on their lives, e.g., schools, housing, environment,

crime, etc. This adherence to the basic concept of fair play can be significant to an institution's commitment to community engagement.

And finally, acknowledgement from such external organizations as regional higher education accrediting agencies and the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education that community engagement has value and should be incorporated into the academic mission of colleges and universities has encouraged this movement on campuses throughout the United States (Carnegie Foundation for Advancement of Teaching 2006).

While community engagement is a growing phenomenon on American college campuses, I would posit that much of this engagement activity remains peripheral on the majority of campuses. There are notable exceptions: the aforementioned University of Pennsylvania, Portland State University, and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, just to name three. (Note: It should be acknowledged that in spite of the departure of three charismatic presidents at those three colleges, the commitment to community engagement has been maintained and institutionalized through the curriculum.) Newer colleges such as California State University-Channel Islands and smaller liberal arts colleges like the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, MA, and Elon University in North Carolina have, however, made partnership with the community a critical part of their educational mission.

Conceptual Framework for Community Engagement

By the very nature of the institution, colleges and universities function in an environment defined by teaching and learning. Extending this definition to the establishment and maintenance of community partnerships might provide an effective conceptual framework for community engagement. As alluded to above, communities are not simply problem-plagued laboratories available and accessible for well-meaning and perhaps not-so-well meaning academics. Communities, and by extension, the organizations and groups that represent the community, are organic, asset-rich entities with much to contribute to collaborative problem solving. The college or university that recognizes the assets extant in the partnering organizations will be well on its way to establishing an effective and meaningful partnership.

In this teaching-learning model, the community can most certainly benefit from the resources of the academic institution. Within low-income neighborhoods throughout the United States, outcomes of the community as classroom model can be seen in the establishment of health clinics, the abatement of environmental hazards, the establishment of technology centers, and the recording of oral histories. In these representative examples the community plays a major role in the education process, providing entrée for the students to the community, providing a human face to urban problems, breaking down racial and ethnic stereotypes, providing leadership and an on-going connection to the community. The practical benefits to be gained by employing community-based learning principles will not be realized without the significant contributions of community partners. In a recent article, Margaret Brabant

and Ann Wilson of Butler University in Indianapolis, IN describe how a community partnership program has “enhanced Butler’s ability to communicate that a college degree should be a communal asset and not merely another accoutrement of social status that is devoid of moral worth” (Brabant and Wilson 2006).

A simpler conceptual model for community engagement would be the consultant model. An individual faculty member will link with a community organization for applied research or problem-solving purposes. As with the community as classroom model, engaging the assets of the community can also be seen as enriching the work of the faculty member. The entrepreneurial faculty member described above will take advantage of the opportunities afforded by the community partner, identifying innovative approaches to research (Silka 2006).

These links can be a one-time event or the faculty person can continue to work with a particular organization over a longer period of time. This is a decision that will be mutually agreed upon by the faculty member and the community organization.

The important thing to keep in mind is that regardless of the approach taken to community engagement, whether it be a more classroom-based, service-learning approach or the more entrepreneurial single faculty member approach, the engagement strategy must be implemented in the context of the institution’s overall mission of commitment to the community.

Potential Partners

Institutions interested in developing partnerships outside the boundaries of the campus will find a universe populated by organizations differentiated by such things as size, maturity, purpose, resources, and leadership. The partnering organizations will be urban or rural, proximate to the campus or distant. The potential partner will have initiated contact with the university or the university will have taken the first step in establishing a collaboration. What enables the college or university and the partnering organization to negotiate these distinctions is a mutually held desire to problem solve.

A successful partnership can only be achieved if all parties perceive mutual gain or benefit. To illustrate this dynamic, I would like to cite as an example an organization called the Worcester UniverCity Partnership. This is a nascent collaborative made up of a consortium of nine colleges or universities within the city limits, the City of Worcester government, and the local business community. This unique partnership was established in 2005 in response to a number of factors, including a diminishing local tax base (major industry had left the region many years ago, leaving property taxes as the main source of municipal revenue), a blighted downtown, and a general belief that the colleges could do “more.”

Beginning with the earliest discussions of this partnership, the City and the business community knew what they wanted from the colleges: to expand and grow their economic impact. A list of economic impact indicators was established, borrowing

liberally from the work of Harvard economist Michael Porter (Initiative for a Competitive Inner city & CEOs for Cities 2002). This list described distinct roles colleges play in a community, including the college as employer, the college as purchaser, the college as real estate developer, and the college as provider of intellectual capital. It was in the City's and business community's interests to have the colleges vigorously address these areas of economic impact. Referring back to our definition of a good partnership, it was then a question of whether addressing these factors would be in the colleges' interest.

A revitalized local economy was certainly in the interest of the colleges of Worcester. Though only one college among the nine could be considered a downtown campus, the other eight institutions understood the benefits to be gained from a more vibrant, healthy community. The UniverCity Partnership has therefore had little difficulty convincing the local colleges of the wisdom and importance of supporting local merchants, trying whenever possible to direct their purchase of goods and services to local businesses. A long-term goal, resulting from this focusing on local businesses will be the expansion of local business and a concomitant increase in local tax revenues.

A hiring initiative is underway targeting unemployed or under-employed Worcester residents for entry-level positions at the local colleges. Working through the City's Employment Development office and targeting low-income residents in HUD-funded Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Areas, a plan is being devised to screen and make job-ready Worcester residents for entry-level job opportunities on the campuses. While the colleges will gain qualified personnel, the community will gain increased employment and residents with greater purchasing power.

The colleges are also partnering with a public-private arts initiative to restore an abandoned downtown theater. Colleges have made a long-term financial commitment in return for special access to the theater, blocks of tickets to scheduled performances, and the opportunity to incorporate the theater into their arts curriculum. The theater can also be highlighted to prospective students and their parents as part of a college recruiting effort. Clearly this partnership represents a win-win for all parties.

In each of the examples cited above the mutual benefit to all collaborating parties was evident. A healthy and vibrant business community attracts new business; more jobs relate to greater spending and additional tax revenues; real estate development, as in the case of the theater, provides an entertainment and educational venue while revitalizing downtown. Where we see the occasional lack of perceived mutual benefit involves the application of the colleges' intellectual capital. While there is little or no reluctance on the part of the local colleges to engage their campus resources in service to the community, there can be a lack of understanding or appreciation on the part of the community as to what benefits will accrue to the colleges through these activities. The colleges must perceive an educational benefit if they are going to commit the time and talents of their faculty and students to community generated projects. Colleges go to some length to explain that they are not social service agencies; they are not commercial ventures; they are not suppliers of "free labor." In a community like

Worcester, where the colleges create such a large footprint, these distinctions become extremely important in the development and sustainability of potential partnerships.

The roles of the partners in the Worcester UniverCity Partnership continue to evolve. As the Partnership matures, the roles of the participating members become more clearly defined. Economic development remains the overarching goal of the Partnership, and it remains in everyone's interest that the City thrives.

Enabling Mechanisms for Community Engagement

Earlier I described a conceptual framework for community engagement. A typical mechanism that enables effective implementation of a conceptual framework within institutions of higher education involves multiple departments within a university partnering with one or more community partners. The model I'm most familiar with, the Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) model funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of University Partnerships, funded a college-based program that required the involvement of a minimum of three academic disciplines. This requirement was an attempt to provide a more comprehensive approach to community problem-solving.

The approach was a good one (notwithstanding the federal government's decision in 2006 to discontinue funding the COPC program) though a higher level of engagement would involve inter-disciplinary approaches to community problem-solving. A good example of this approach resides at the University of Massachusetts-Lowell's Regional Economic and Social Development Department, a Center that has combined disciplines and has approached community challenges in a much more comprehensive manner.

Many colleges have established an Office of Community Affairs or Office of Community Engagement. Typically, the person in that position is someone not from the academic ranks, but rather someone from the community. This office, preferably an adjunct to the President's office, serves as both the portal of entry to the University and the University's liaison to the community. The office is the primary link to the institutional partners and can serve as a broker among individual faculty members and community organizations. The keys to success in this model are credibility and accessibility, both on and off the campus.

Policy and Structural Modalities for Effective, Ethical and Sustainable Partnerships

Earlier I addressed the importance of top-level leadership in developing and sustaining a commitment to community engagement. It will be these leaders, these champions of community partnerships, who will establish the supportive environment necessary to sustain community engagement. While we can acknowledge the potentially obstructionist and reactionary influence of entrenched and tenured faculty and others

in the academic hierarchy on campus-wide innovation, the importance of the president cannot be understated.

It is this supportive leadership from which the resources to support community engagement initiatives should flow. Colleges too numerous to list here have used their own resources, tapped their endowment, and made faculty and staff time available to support a mission of engagement. Again, citing Worcester as an example, we see major inner city investment on the part of the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Science; a multi-million dollar bio tech park being developed by Worcester Polytechnic Institute; and a \$1.7 million loan guarantee by the College of the Holy Cross to support an affordable housing initiative in an adjoining neighborhood.

Where an institution chooses to locate an office focusing on engagement activities is a key policy issue. Several years ago it seemed appropriate to locate these activities in a Student Life or Student Activities office. Much of what was happening off-campus was considered extra-curricular or volunteer/service activity. As the civic engagement movement matured and the work and influence of organizations like Campus Compact became more prominent, more of these activities were seen as an integral part of the academic program and placement within an academic department could be defended. If curriculum is a key to sustaining engagement activities more thought should be given to locating the focal point of civic engagement with an academic department.

Another alternative, and one which I feel demonstrates true commitment on the part of the institution, is the placement of a community engagement coordinator in the President's office. The symbolism of a staff person charged with representing the institution to the community (and being the first point of contact at the university) being in the President's office is very strong. Within the Worcester UniverCity Partnership these points of contact have been identified as Campus Liaisons. Their ties to the campus and to the community make coordination with other elements of the UniverCity Partnership much easier to negotiate.

Policies determining how and when a college or university communicates with the community are extremely important. Is campus leadership accessible to community leaders? Is the campus itself open and inviting to the community? Are campus leaders visible in the community? How are town-gown conflicts handled? Avoiding all potential sources of conflict is difficult if not impossible; open communication strategies and a general environment of respect will help ensure a continuing dialogue. A partnership like the Worcester UniverCity Partnership, with a conceptual framework that includes various community constituencies, will be much better able to function openly and effectively within the broader community.

Conscious and vigilant attention to policies that could be perceived as counter to community engagement initiatives is also important. Examples of an academic department working hard at establishing partnerships in a neighborhood while at the same time the real estate arm of the campus was planning to buy up houses in the

same neighborhood to put in a parking facility will cause irreparable damage to partnership activities.

Challenges to Effective Partnerships

Establishing and maintaining effective community partnership is difficult in the best of circumstances. There are inherent factors that present challenges from the very beginning.

For example, the distinct culture of the academy must be acknowledged. Life beyond the campus does not exist on a semester or term basis. Leaders of partnering organizations are not apt to take year-long sabbatical leaves from their work. Community problems cannot be put on hold because of a lack of enrollment. All of these aspects of college life—taken for granted by those of us involved with colleges or universities—must be factored into our relationships with external partners and into our plans to implement partnership activities.

Earlier I described at some length the importance of strong campus leadership, going as far as describing some presidents as “champions” of this work. This asset, however, can quickly turn into a challenge or obstacle if that president leaves and is replaced by a president with a much different agenda. There is a risk when the commitment to community engagement on the part of the college or university is embodied in a president or other charismatic leader on campus. Embedding the concepts of community partnership throughout the campus, particularly through the curriculum, is one method of ensuring that civic engagement will survive the loss of any one individual, however charismatic. In Worcester we have been fortunate to witness what appears to be a seamless transition from one president to another at both Clark University and Worcester Polytechnic Institute. In both cases community partnership programs initiated by an earlier president have been continued by the new presidents.

Acknowledging the work with communities through an official line in the annual operating budget is another method of ensuring sustainability.

The effect of leadership change can also impact partnering organizations. Colleges must be prepared to engage new community leaders, leaders who may not share the vision or values of their predecessors. The phenomenon of the baby boomer generation facing retirement will be felt at many social service agencies, nonprofits, and community-based organizations. A new generation of leadership is coming along, perhaps holding different values.

This phenomenon does not begin to take into account grass-roots partners, organizations frequently led by low-income people who may have personal or family situations that cause them to abandon completely or take time away from their partnership activities. All of these leadership issues pose significant challenges to the implementation and management of effective partnerships.

Even when stable leadership is in place other obstacles to successful partnering will surface, many of these perceptual in nature. I earlier described a small but vocal minority of Worcester citizens calling upon the city to extract from the colleges what are referred to as Payments In Lieu Of Taxes, or PILOTs. The establishment of the UniverCity Partnership was in part a response to this demand. It has been the colleges' position (and the city has passively agreed) that the contributions they make to the community through a great variety of outreach and partnering programs far outweigh the value of a symbolic tax payment. With the main focus of the Worcester UniverCity Partnership being economic development and anticipated increases in business revenues, employment, and tax revenues on the horizon, the city has been willing to support the Partnership and table any formal discussion and vote on PILOTs. Were the proponents of PILOTs to have their way, a not unlikely result would be a curtailment or reduction of the contributions the colleges currently make to the greater community, rendering the value of a PILOT payment purely symbolic.

Partnerships frequently have to overcome the challenge of a history of bad relations or no relations at all with their surrounding communities. Too often colleges are perceived as distant and removed from the communities and neighborhoods immediately outside their gated walls, and deservedly so. Entering into partnerships with communities that are suspicious at best and hostile at worst is a serious challenge. A case in point within the Worcester UniverCity Partnership is member institution, the College of the Holy Cross. For many years, Holy Cross was, literally and figuratively, the "College on the Hill." In recent years a major interstate highway was constructed on the edge of the campus, effectively cutting it off from much of Worcester. Adding to this physical isolation was the sense that the college was populated almost exclusively with privileged young people from outside the area.

Within the past five years, the College has done much to change many of these negative perceptions. The College has established and supports an elementary school for low-income boys; its students spend thousands of hours volunteering at schools and social service agencies; the College made their athletic field available to a professional baseball team, bringing baseball back to the city after a lengthy absence; and possibly most important, the College has awarded scholarships to inner city Worcester students, changing dramatically the profile of a Holy Cross student.

How an institution chooses to manage a partnership can present a challenge. Has the institution identified a staff person (or persons) who is (are) dedicated to the administration of partnerships? Is there an office on campus, resourced appropriately, that is the focal point for community engagement activities? Are faculty members allowed release time to adequately pursue and manage partnership initiatives? A positive answer to each of these questions would indicate a serious intent to implement successful partnerships.

Assuring Quality of Partnership Activities

Assuring the quality of partnership activities begins and ends with good communication. At the front end it involves the establishment of mutually agreed upon goals and objectives of the partnership. All parties must perceive a benefit to be derived from the partnership. The roles of each partner must be clearly defined and agreed upon. Once these roles are defined, at least on the campus, the president or someone in the campus hierarchy must ensure that the person responsible for partnership activities has both the authority and the resources necessary to manage the initiatives. Ignoring these initial planning steps will cause serious problems as the partnership attempts to implement its program.

As a partnership moves beyond the planning stage and into the implementation phase, communication continues to be a vital part of quality assurance. On-going assessment of partnership activities designed to measure progress is key to the ultimate success of the partnering initiative. It should be pointed out that evaluation is not the sole responsibility of the academic institution. The community partner must be an equal partner in any assessment effort. Successful partnerships have provided community partners with the tools and skills to survey and assess progress of partnership activities. This practice not only provides data needed by the project but it also empowers local residents with new skills and reinforces the perception of partners as equals.

Building upon this example of data collection, another step that can ensure the quality and sustainability of partnerships is sharing results or outcomes with partnering organizations. Too often, the results of applied or community-based research activities are only shared among other academics. When studies or surveys are published, they are only seen in academic journals. It is important to ensure that data or results of this research are shared in media accessible to local residents such as newsletters, Web sites, and community meetings.

Strategies for Promoting, Advancing and Embedding Community Engagement

In the recent publication, *Creating a New Kind of University: Institutionalizing Community-University Engagement* (Percy, Zimpher, and Brukardt 2006), the authors address the issue of sustaining partnerships and furthering the overall movement. They identify six keys to the continued development of community engagement:

1. Integrate engagement into the mission of the institution,
2. Forge partnerships as the overarching framework for engagement,
3. Renew and redefine discovery and scholarship,
4. Integrate engagement into teaching and learning,
5. Recruit and support new champions, and
6. Create radical institution change.

A brief analysis of these practices will be helpful in understanding more fully how sustainable partnerships can be developed.

Integrate engagement into the mission of the institution

While most college and university mission statements acknowledge a commitment to the greater community (region, state) the reality frequently falls considerably short of what we hold out as the definition of an engaged institution. Efforts ranging from research and development initiatives that have produced the Silicon Valleys of the world to one-time student volunteer efforts to clean a vacant lot have traditionally defined a college or university's commitment to their immediate community. Clearly these are good things, but they stop short of what Zimpher and others describe in their discussion of how engaged universities can best serve society: "...[by] preparing students to be active, principled citizens and by linking knowledge to the public good through engaged scholarship" (Percy, Zimpher, and Brukardt 2006).

At a recent meeting of the Worcester City Council two college-sponsored initiatives were being recognized—one involving a multi-million dollar bio-tech research center being built by Worcester Polytechnic Institute on a reclaimed brown field and the other involving a group of predominantly minority high school students, led by a local college faculty member, reporting on research they accomplished that identified targeted advertising of tobacco products in low-income neighborhoods and in school zones. In looking objectively at these examples of campus – community partnerships, it would be agreed that the bio tech facility will be an economically significant addition to the city and a very good example of a college-community partnership. If however, we apply the definition of engagement offered above by Nancy Zimpher and her colleagues, the work of that one college professor with the group of inner city high school students may, in another sense, be a better example of real community engagement.

Forge partnerships as the overarching framework for engagement

Again, we can look at traditional ways a college or university can link to the community: tutors, recreation aides, volunteers in a variety of social service settings. In Worcester, students contribute over five hundred thousand hours of volunteer service per year to a variety of institutions, an impressive number, indeed, but I would point out that only a portion of these hours represents real partnerships between the colleges and the community. We have two notable exceptions. The first is Clark University, with its long and rich history as a partner with a neighborhood community development corporation. They are intimately involved with education, housing, youth activities, and economic development initiatives, with students, faculty, and administration all taking part in engagement activities.

The second example is The College of the Holy Cross, the small Jesuit institution on the south side of the city. Holy Cross has more recently developed a strong partnership with a neighborhood organization and has joined them in housing, economic development, and capacity building projects—again, involving all the resources of the college.

In both examples the colleges have worked to build the capacity of their partnering organizations, ensuring that they are an equal in dealing both with the college and with other potential collaborators. These partnerships will only enhance the college's ability to engage in the community, providing greater opportunities for a curriculum that will serve their respective students as well as the public good.

The Worcester UniverCity Partnership has now entered the picture, providing an umbrella organization that can extend beyond campus boundaries and specific college-community group partnerships and open up the entire community to potential partnerships. Nonprofit agencies, neighborhood business associations, city agencies, all have access to a greater variety of academic resources.

We are just beginning to examine the potential of inter-disciplinary and cross institutional avenues of cooperation within the Partnership. An exciting aspect of the Colleges of Worcester Consortium is the wide variety of institutions that form the Consortium, including a medical school; a pharmacy school; a school of engineering; a community (two-year) college; a private, career-oriented college; two liberal arts colleges; and a local campus of the state college system. Each institution has unique assets. The challenge ahead of us is to maximize these assets, making the total greater than the sum of the parts.

Renew and redefine discovery and scholarship

A need exists to elevate the perceived value of community-based or applied research. As opposition to this form of scholarship erodes, more and more faculty will be free to pursue research that informs their discipline based on real issues, makes a contribution to the community, and adds an element of greater citizenship to a student's education. Just as we need leading academic administrators to promote and champion the overall concept of community engagement, we also need leaders in the academic disciplines—deans, department heads, professional associations, and scholarly journals—to recognize the value and inherent scholarship of community-based research.

Integrate engagement into teaching and learning

More and more faculty members, many from the ranks of what we have described as entrepreneurial faculty, have embraced service-learning. What is most encouraging is that these faculty members come from the full range of American higher education institutions and a broad array of disciplines. In my former position as Director of the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of University Partnerships we worked closely with Campus Compact and its state affiliates. We recognized that while we were not funding service-learning projects per se, we understood that a college's curriculum was an essential part of an institution's approach and ultimate commitment to the community. Service-learning was a way to involve the institution outside the classroom in a manner that could benefit the community while enhancing the student's education.

Recruit and support new champions

In a chapter I contributed to the book *Creating a New Kind of University: Institutionalizing Community-University Engagement*, I identify some new leaders in the field of community engagement at a variety of American campuses: Ricardo Romo, President of the University of Texas-San Antonio; Sister Kathleen Ross, President of Heritage University, Washington; and Beverly Daniel Tatum, President of Spelman College in Atlanta, GA just to name three.

Clearly this search for champions must not be limited to the academy. The eloquent and powerful voices of our community partners must be heard. A recently convened conference at the Wingspread Conference Center in Wisconsin sponsored by the Campus Community Partnership for Health specifically invited a group of community partners to solicit their views on campus community partnerships. Listening to the voices of these champions should be part of a strategy to advance community partnerships.

Create institutional change

Stepping away from traditional modes of instruction may seem radical enough for many colleges. Venturing into the immutable areas of rank, tenure, and promotion and suggesting change in these areas would, on many campuses, go beyond radical, appearing to many to be a frontal assault on the most basic values of the academy. It is precisely in these areas, however, that change must occur.

A junior faculty member at a college in Worcester, when considering taking on a community-based learning project with his class, had to consider the impact this work would have on the traditional demands of his department and his discipline. Would the research emanating from this effort be publishable in the “right” journal? Would the time spent in the community take away from time spent on more acceptable campus or departmental responsibilities (e.g., committee work)? Would release time be an option for the time intensive work in the community?

The happy ending to this scenario is that the faculty member chose to involve his class in this project. Would other young faculty make the same choice? Perhaps not, but these are not choices that should be forced upon faculty.

New institutions may be able to take the lead and prove that departures from the traditional requirements of promotion and reward will not signal the demise of higher education. Rather, it will make colleges and universities more exciting places to teach and learn and enable them to more easily bring the resources of the campus to bear on contemporary issues of the community.

Recommendations to promote development, management and practice of effective, ethical and sustainable Partnerships for Community Engagement

A number of factors come to mind when considering the development of sustainable and ethical partnerships. A place to start would be with a *mutually agreed upon definition of partnership*. Any definition should clearly describe a collaboration among equals. Given the imbalance in resources, influence, and power among many institutions of higher education and their community partners, achieving this sense of equality can be difficult. Institutions like Clark University have addressed this issue by limiting the University's presence on a community partnership governing board to minority status, assuring the community partner a majority position.

A college or university and its community partners must establish *common ground*. Earlier I described this as a shared vision. The goals of the partnership must be in the best interest of all parties to the partnership. In Worcester all partners have agreed that an improved local economy is the main goal. Identifying the means to accomplishing this goal will require an understanding and appreciation of what each partnering organization will contribute to the process as well as what benefit(s) they will derive from their participation.

As the partnership goes forward, it is important that each partner *understand their own and others' limitations*. No one institution is all things to all people. Accepting this premise can be especially difficult for a community like Worcester that looks to colleges to fill the void caused by the loss of business and industry. With only a limited understanding of college finances and endowments, "responsible" community voices have asked local colleges to assume the costs of such non-mission related endeavors as the construction of a public high school.

Worcester is fortunate to have a variety of academic institutions as members of the UniverCity Partnership. There is potential to use the resources of these varied institutions to address an array of community problems. A single institution will be limited in its response to issues raised by the community and will have to convey these limitations to a community that may not appreciate what the college can or cannot do.

In its zeal to work in the community, a college must take care to *understand the history or track record* of their own or other institutions in that community. A colleague in Worcester has recently proposed a type of community-based research clearinghouse that would catalog past community-based research projects conducted in Worcester and prevent the "research fatigue" afflicting some communities today. The "community as laboratory" is not an approach that will foster good partnerships.

Before partnerships are entered into a commitment should be in place to *adequately resource* these efforts. An inability to follow through on agreed upon goals and objectives could irreparably damage relations with community partners.

Conclusion

Leaders in the scholarship of engagement have established a context and an environment that will enable a new generation of faculty, students, and community partners to build upon their work and develop new educational partnerships. While hard work remains to convince skeptics of the value of this effort, and no “one size fits all” approach is available, adhering to the basic values and tenets described above will enable institutions to begin to engage with their surrounding communities, improving the community and enhancing the educational process.

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