

Exploring Community-Engaged Scholarship as an Intervention to Change and Improve Communities

2014 Recipient of the Ernest A. Lynton Award for the Scholarship of Engagement of Early Career Faculty

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Abstract

For most colleges and universities, community-engaged scholarship (CES) is a value that supports the public mission of academic institutions. However, shifting CES from a core value to a guiding principle requires demonstrable support and structural modifications to academic practices and policies. Through this reflective paper, I will propose some considerations for how academic institutions may develop and support a culture of community-engaged scholarship to collaboratively contribute to meaningful and lasting improvements with communities.

It is a great honor and blessing to be the recipient of the 2014 Ernest A. Lynton Award for the Scholarship of Engagement of Early Career Faculty. Ernest A. Lynton proposed, “We need to think of knowledge in an ecological fashion, recognizing the complex, multi-faceted, and multiply-connected system by means of which discovery, aggregation, synthesis, dissemination, and application are all interconnected” (1994, 10). Community-engaged scholarship (CES) supports the integration of research, teaching, and service for community impact through mutually beneficial and reinforcing activities supported through community-academic partnerships. I am grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with knowledgeable, skilled, and committed community partners who meaningfully contribute to change and improvement in communities. The award process has occasioned the opportunity to reflect and further refine my approach to community-engaged scholarship as an early career tenure-track professor at the University of Kansas in the Department of Applied Behavioral Science. Through this paper, I will share my experience and distill what I have learned as a community-engaged scholar, as well as propose considerations for how to further advance the scholarship of engagement.

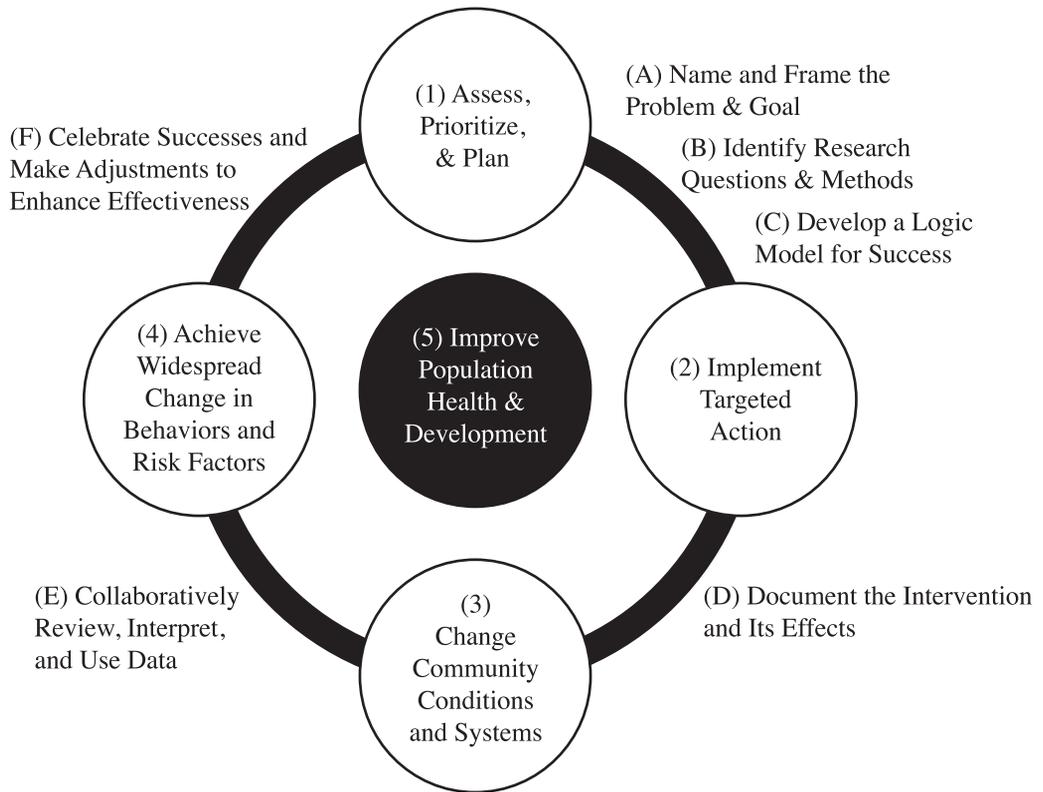
Supporting Community-Engaged Scholarship through Research, Teaching, and Service

Based on cross-disciplinary training in behavioral psychology, community psychology, and urban planning, I was exposed to community-engaged scholarship in both my undergraduate and graduate studies by my faculty mentors, Drs. Jacqueline Franklin at Jackson State University and Stephen Fawcett at the University of Kansas. As an urban affairs major at Jackson State University in Mississippi, I developed a strong commitment to supporting place-based efforts that involve and serve the community as the primary audience and benefactor of academic activities. Then, through graduate studies at the University of Kansas in urban planning and later in behavioral psychology (applied behavioral analysis), I began to understand the importance of involving the community in identifying and addressing community-validated problems of social significance. As a graduate student, I served as a graduate research assistant with Dr. Stephen Fawcett and the Work Group for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas (KUWG), and I am now an associate director with the research center. The KUWG promotes change and improvement in community-determined outcomes by providing capacity-building supports to individuals and groups in the community. For example, colleagues at the KUWG have collaboratively supported the development of the Community Tool Box (www.ctb.ku.edu), a free online resource that provides more than 7,000 pages of practical community capacity-building tools available in English, Spanish, and Arabic.

Community-Engaged Research

With the KUWG, I collaborate with community partners to support community-based intervention and evaluation efforts in the areas of adolescent substance abuse prevention, community violence prevention, positive youth development, and community capacity-building. Through my affiliation with the KUWG, I was trained in community-based participatory research (CBPR) and evaluation (CBPE) methods as a graduate student, which now undergirds my approach as a community-engaged scholar. Community stakeholders are equitably engaged as participants in all phases of the research process, including in the assessment and identification of the community problem; development and implementation of the intervention; review and interpretation of data; and in the communication and dissemination of information to key audiences. Figure 1 presents an integrated framework that guides my approach to engaged scholarship based on the Framework for Collaborative Public Health Action in Communities (Fawcett et al. 2000, 82) and the Model for Participatory Evaluation (Fawcett et al. 2003, 24). Now, I train both undergraduate and graduate students in the use of these models to support the development and implementation of community-based initiatives. Through collaborations with community partners, I have empirically examined the implementation of both models in supporting community-based participatory research (Watson-Thompson et al. 2013b) and evaluation activities (Watson-Thompson et al. 2013a).

Figure 1. An integrated model presenting the Participatory Evaluation Framework for Collaborative Action that presents the five-phase framework for collaborative action and a six-step model for supporting participatory evaluation efforts with community partners.



Source: Adapted from Fawcett et al. 2000, 82; Institute of Medicine 2002, 186; Fawcett et al. 2003, 24, and Fawcett et al. 2010, 3.

In the first phase of the model, community and academic partners collaboratively assess and prioritize community-level problems and goals to be addressed. The community problems are framed in a manner that allows diverse participation in addressing the issue across community sectors and multiple academic disciplines. The community partners also are engaged with academic partners in shaping the research agenda by collectively developing the research and evaluation questions to be examined. In this phase of the framework, the agenda for the collaborative effort to be supported through engaged scholarship is further clarified through the development and use of a logic model and strategic action plans. The logic model provides a visual summary of the intervention approach that will be used by the academic and community partner to address the problem or goal area.

In the second phase, community and academic partners support targeted action in the community through community-based implementation of research interventions by community partners. In the third phase, targeted action leads to community and

systems changes, defined as new or modified programs, policies, or practices. Community and system change serves as a key measure of how the environment is being modified to support improvements in community-level outcomes. As an ongoing part of the process, data are collected by community partners and collaboratively shared and reviewed with academic partners to understand how the initiative is contributing to improvements in prioritized community-level outcomes. Community partners are trained in the use of the Online Documentation and Support System (ODSS), a community-friendly web-based data collection portal developed by the KU Work Group to support participatory evaluation activities. The ODSS produces automated graphs and reports based on data collected in the system to enable community partners to easily access and use data to support a variety of research and practice activities (e.g., funder reports, board reports). The data are used by both community and academic partners to guide decision-making and adjustments in implementing community-based interventions.

As an example, I work collaboratively with community partners, such as the Aim4Peace Violence Prevention Initiative through the Kansas City, Missouri Health Department, to support community-participatory evaluation efforts to reduce homicides and firearm aggravated assaults in a priority neighborhood. Based on a community-led assessment process, unresolved arguments and conflicts were identified to substantially contribute to homicides and aggravated assaults in Kansas City, Missouri. After reviewing appropriate violence prevention initiatives, community partners identified the Cure Violence (formerly CeaseFire Chicago) model as appropriate to adapt and implement in Kansas City. The academic and community partners engaged jointly in developing a logic model and an evaluation plan to guide local implementation and adaptation of the intervention. The community partners regularly documented the implementation of community-level change activities facilitated by the initiative such as the implementation of conflict mediation trainings with youth in local schools or policy changes within the local government to support improved hiring processes for individuals with a criminal record. Based on the evaluation plan, community partners regularly recorded the implementation of community facilitated intervention activities in the ODSS. Between 2008 and 2013, the initiative collaboratively facilitated 186 program, policy, and practice changes in the community to support violence prevention efforts. The process and community-level outcome data recorded in the ODSS, including community change and behavioral outcome data, were regularly reviewed by both the community and academic partners to guide decision-making. The ongoing process of working jointly as community-academic partners to collect, review, and make sense of the data has resulted in program enhancements, which have contributed to improvements in community-level outcomes (i.e., reductions in homicides and aggravated assaults in priority area). After five years of program implementation, the two geographical areas prioritized by Aim4Peace, which historically experienced disproportionately higher rates of violence as compared to other areas in the city, experienced between a 42 to 50 percent decrease in the number of homicides. Through the collaboration with Aim4Peace, we have engaged in a variety of community-guided research activities, including the co-submission and award of grants, co-authorship on published articles

(Watson-Thompson et al. 2013a, 2013b), co-presentations at both academic and community-based meetings, as well as the engagement of service-learning students in supporting Aim4Peace activities.

Reflections and Challenges in Supporting Community-Engaged Research

Based on principles of community-based participatory research, it is critical to develop genuine and maintained relationships with community partners based on a shared agenda that is mutually beneficial. For many communities, particularly those in urban areas, it is necessary to develop relationships and research agendas that are not solely contingent on the researchers' needs or the availability of grant funding. Otherwise, short-term and sporadic community partnerships further contribute to community perceptions of academic mistrust. My mentor, Dr. Franklin, described this imbalance of academic-community relationships and power as “pimping the community.” Fortunately, I had developed a core base of community partners and projects that were established prior to my tenure-track faculty appointment. However, even with already established community partnerships, ongoing dedicated time is required to support community-based research and evaluation processes, as well as to maintain trust and rapport. After community research partnerships are established, a substantial investment of time is required to maintain the relationships, which often takes the form of community-engaged service (e.g., serve on community boards, develop community reports). For faculty colleagues who evaluate community-engaged research activities for merit review or reappointment, promotion, and tenure (RPT) processes, the types of challenges experienced that may result in more modest publication schedules may not always be well understood. Furthermore, there are often not departmental or more broad university models for how to evaluate community-engaged research activities to assess not only the scholarly, but as important, the public impact.

Although there are many benefits to community-based participatory research and evaluation, the advantages are often restricted by unparalleled university expectations and conditions for competing research obligations by faculty. One of the main benefits of community-engaged research is that it increases the likelihood for intervention effectiveness and sustainability by community partners. However, for many academic institutions, the primary indicator of research impact is based on traditional measures of the quantity of peer-reviewed journal articles, and scholarly impact based on article citations and journal impact factors. Although there are some progressive colleges and universities that have supported community-engaged scholarship as a component of RPT processes, many academic institutions, particularly research universities, have not implemented clear contingencies that promote and incentivize engaged scholarship (Saltmarsh et al. 2009, 29). Furthermore, the development of community-friendly materials (e.g., assessments, evaluation reports) valued by community partners and demonstrated to have public impact often competes with the production of publications for academic audiences. Although materials developed by community partners often can be converted to scholarly manuscripts for submission to peer-

reviewed journals, it can be a time-consuming process to adapt materials for multiple community and academic audiences. Saltmarsh et al. (2009, 28) suggests that “community-engaged scholarship redefines what constitutes a ‘publication’ and redefines who is a ‘peer’ in the peer review process.” However, in my experience, many academic institutions and departments have not fully implemented this type of reciprocity in the assessment of community-engaged scholarship activities.

Additional challenges commonly experienced by community-engaged researchers are related to research methodologies, data collection measures and time periods. Based on a community-based participatory approach, stronger experimental (e.g., randomized control trials) and quasi-experimental (e.g., interrupted time series with switching replication) designs may not be deemed appropriate by community partners. The result of less rigorous research methods may limit publications in journal outlets with higher impact scores (Jacquez 2013, 19). For instance, in supporting violence prevention initiatives, randomization or delays in the implementation of the intervention with individuals or groups may be unethical. Relatedly, community-based research outcomes often are best supported through longitudinal studies (e.g., annual rates of substance use, rates of homicides) which may limit the ability to rapidly produce publications. As an example, I co-led the evaluation of a five-year federally funded underage drinking initiative for the state of Kansas through the Department on Aging and Disability Services (formerly Social Rehabilitation Services). The key outcome measure identified by community partners was annual rates of 30-day alcohol use. During the study period, our team supported the publication of articles related to the community process (Anderson-Carpenter et al. 2014); however, the evaluation questions of interest to community partners focused on community-level behavioral outcome data over the five-year grant period. In another experience, a community partner achieved significant outcomes in reducing rates of a problem behavior, however, due to political reasons the partner elected to not publish or more broadly disseminate the results of the study, but used the data internally to examine, validate, and improve the initiative.

Community-Engaged Teaching

As a faculty member in the Department of Applied Behavioral Science, the scholarship of teaching through service-learning and outreach activities is highly valued and commonly accepted. Faculty mentors in the department both provided guidance and set precedence for innovative ways to integrate service-learning and outreach into the course curriculum. Community-based teaching and learning are core components of all my courses including my community leadership, community health, and development competencies, practicum in community health and development, and community-based independent study courses. In each course, an array of service activities is offered that students can choose to support including direct service, indirect service, and/or participatory research activities. For instance, in my community development competencies course, students can engage in direct service through eight hours of service monthly for a total of 24 hours over the semester, or in indirect service by developing a grant proposal for a partner organization. Students often have varying

histories and service experiences; therefore, meeting students where they are and allowing them to select from a menu of service opportunities within the course makes it more likely that they will maintain involvement in reinforcing types of community engagement longer-term. From my observations, a “one size fits all” approach to service-learning is ineffective (Longo 2007, 131). Students who complete the series of courses I instruct are provided with varied opportunities for diverse community-engaged learning experiences through repeated exposures and opportunities, which also contributes to establishing a behavior and history of reinforcement.

Through the course requirements, students are challenged to collaborate with diverse communities, groups, and populations. At the University of Kansas, my home campus is located in Lawrence, Kansas, which may be considered part of the regional metropolitan corridor, but is located approximately 45 minutes from the urban core of Kansas City. In several of my courses, students are challenged to participate in community efforts related to issues affecting diverse metropolitan communities and populations, which is often a novel experience for many students who are from rural and homogenous parts of the state. Through the application of knowledge, students are reinforced by meaningful and immediate application of course content, which thereby enhances their understanding and commitment to community engagement. For instance, a student from Kenya and another student from the Cheyenne River Sioux tribe in South Dakota both received awards from agencies to support youth development efforts in their home communities based on proposals developed through supports offered in the community health and development competencies course.

Through community-engaged learning, opportunities are occasioned to enhance the knowledge, skills, and ability of not only students, but also community members and partners. The Community Tool Box ([http:// http://ctb.ku.edu/en](http://http://ctb.ku.edu/en)) curriculum, developed by the KU Work Group and collaborative partners, is used to train both undergraduate and graduate students through community-based trainings and capacity-building technical supports with community partners. Both formal and informal opportunities are occasioned to engage community members in community-engaged teaching and training. For instance, a graduate certificate in community health and development is offered to non-degree seeking students and community members through the graduate school and the Department of Applied Behavioral Science. Furthermore, more informal community-based training and technical support often is provided to individuals and groups such as coalitions in the community often through not only teaching, but also community-engaged research or service activities. The training formats support product-based learning so that the students or community members trained contribute to developing materials such as a grant application, community project proposal, or community assessment, which further extend opportunities for community-engaged learning and service after the course is completed.

Engaged scholarship in teaching supports the involvement of practitioners in academia, which serves as a bridge for the university and the community. Several of my research partners engage students in service-learning activities, which helps to ensure that community partners are able to reap the multiple and simultaneous benefits

of community-academic partnerships. Service-learning provides the opportunity for students to sample community-based settings, professions, and occupations, as well as establish meaningful contacts and connections in the community. Similarly, community engagement affords community partners the opportunity to informally influence student learning, as well as provides opportunities to access and train students who may be potential future employees. In some of my courses, community partners are also more formally integrated into the classroom experience as guest lecturers, panelists, and advisors or consultants on community-based course projects. For example, a community partner, who is a physician, has provided guest lectures on socioeconomic determinants of health and disparities. Similarly, for student grant and project proposals, student groups meet with partner organizations periodically throughout the semester during class using Skype to discuss project development. Also, in my practicum courses, students are co-supervised by an instructor and community supervisor, who collaboratively provide guidance to the student in developing a community-based product (e.g., assessment).

In my courses, community partners are provided multiple opportunities to evaluate student performance, as a component of a student's grade, through both written and oral feedback mechanisms. Furthermore, students are prompted to support ongoing critical reflection throughout the semester, which culminates through a service-learning and course reflection poster fair. Often, community-engaged teaching activities may result in additional requirements and time commitments of the faculty to support the community-academic partnerships and responsibilities. For example, it is necessary for faculty to establish and maintain community relationships, identify and coordinate appropriate service-learning activities, and ensure student development of high-quality community products and activities, which often necessitates a more intensive process for student review, feedback, and reflection.

Reflections and Challenges in Supporting Community-Engaged Teaching

From my observations, community-engaged teaching may be most immediately impactful on students who otherwise may be considered at risk for achieving academic success. It has been evidenced that service-learning can increase self-efficacy (Knapp, Bradley, and Levesque-Bristol 2010, 238). For potentially at-risk students, community-engaged learning serves as a reinforcer and provides more immediate meaning and purpose to their coursework and academic experiences. For instance, in my community leadership course, there was a student who took the course the first semester after returning to the university from academic probation. The student indicated that upon returning she felt overwhelmed and had decided to leave college, but through course-engaged learning opportunities afforded through the course she found value and utility in her academic experience, which reaffirmed her purpose for completing college. Although service-learning is an important learning goal for all students, community-engaged learning may be particularly important in the retention of racial and ethnic minority students (Ward and Wolf-Wendel 2000, 272). Service-learning may also

provide a dual-purpose as a student marketing and retention tool, in addition to supporting student learning outcomes. Therefore, it is important to consider how to communicate and promote the importance of service-learning from the integrated perspective of other academic departments such as admissions, academic advising, multicultural affairs offices, and college/university career centers.

Although the basic concept of service-learning, as compared to community-engaged research or service, is more commonly understood and valued among university faculty and administrators, there is less consensus about how to assess the impact of service-learning courses on community and student outcomes. The majority of students are appreciative of the opportunity to engage in more applied learning formats. However, for some students, service-learning often requires a shift in the student paradigm for learning in a way that is not always immediately appreciated by all students, particularly for those for whom community engagement is novel or for those who have had prior adverse experiences. There are some students who do not embrace the challenge service-learning offers to move from the classroom to application in the community. Each semester, there is always a subset of students who become intimidated by the fluidity in the course that allows for moving project deadlines if a community process such as collecting data or facilitating community-engaged processes takes longer than originally anticipated. When I first began teaching, this tension often frustrated me. After seeking consultation from colleagues in the Center for Teaching Excellence, it became more apparent that student perceptions of their course and service-learning experiences should not be the primary indicator of instructor or course effectiveness. The director of the KU Center for Teaching Excellence challenged me to identify other complementary mechanisms for assessing the purpose of the courses as it related to both student outcomes and community impact.

Community-Engaged Service

As a community-engaged scholar, community-based service is often integrated into both research and teaching activities. The traditional distribution of research, teaching, and service as discrete activities is not often realistic as the faculty role and responsibilities are reinforced through interdependent and synergistic community-academic engagements. For instance, I serve on the executive and advisory boards for several community and faith-based organizations in the Kansas City metropolitan area. Through affiliation with the boards, I am able to broker just-in-time community-academic relationships and supports for partners, as well as provide community capacity-building expertise. Furthermore, in several courses, I provide community partners with indirect consultation by guiding students in the development of grant applications, community assessments, and program evaluations. Additionally, I often serve as a resource for academic colleagues who seek community credibility to connect or engage with different communities and groups. In general, community-engaged scholarship enhances the social capital of community and academic partners by facilitating the bi-directional exchange of information and resources for community benefit.

Over the past couple of years, I have worked closely with community-based partners and students to develop a couple of service-based youth development initiatives which have supported the scholarship of integration and application. One initiative is LEAD UP (Leadership, Education, and Adolescent Development for Unlimited Possibilities), which focuses on providing youth leadership and college prep training and support to racial and ethnic minority youth in eighth through twelfth grades. The initiative began to address immediate needs observed working with youth in the Kansas City metro area who had very limited knowledge and guidance for how to prepare for life after high school. Interestingly, it was noted that academic institutions were not accessible to many youth. Even though the institutions were geographically available or within close proximity, many youth had still not visited an academic institution. Furthermore, neither the youth nor the majority of parents had access to individuals in college settings or were knowledgeable of how to select an appropriate postsecondary option. LEAD UP provides youth with biannual college visits, ongoing undergraduate student contact and coaching, positive youth peer networks, and parent supports. Through the initiative, we partnered with multiple KU offices including the Admissions Department, McNair Scholars Program, Student Money Management Services, the Office of Multicultural Affairs, the Department of Applied Behavioral Science, and the KU Work Group for Community Health and Development.

The development of the initiative has provided rich undergraduate leadership and training opportunities, as well as research experience. Based on the initial pilot of the program with a small group of African American youth from the Kansas City metro area, the program was expanded to also include youth from the Cheyenne River Sioux tribe in South Dakota based on the initiative and securing of a small grant by an undergraduate student, Jordyn Gunville. She thought the program could greatly benefit the youth from her home community and reservation, and she began to develop a proposal in the community health and development competencies course to expand the approach and population served through the program. After developing the proposal in the course, she submitted and received funding for the proposal. Then, through a series of independent study courses, she and another undergraduate student supported the development and implementation of the initiative. The program approach is now being refined in partnership with community and faith-based partners both in the KC metro area including Tabernacle Community Development Center, Inc., and Made-Men, Inc., as well as with the Cheyenne River Sioux tribe Title 1 program. Ultimately, the goal is to develop and pilot an effective approach to support community-based college access programs.

Reflections and Lessons Learned in Supporting Community-Engaged Service

Although community-engaged service may seemingly be the most apparent form of engaged scholarship, at times there are misconceptions regarding its merit. From my experience, community-engaged service may be minimized and discredited as an appropriate form of scholarly service by those who are unable to distinguish it from general community service. Boyer (1996) indicates that “a sharp distinction must be

drawn between citizenship activities and projects that relate to scholarship itself...To be considered scholarship, service activities must be tied directly to one's special field of knowledge and relate to, and flow directly out of, this activity (22).” Based on my work, I serve on executive and advisory boards and offer pro bono consultation for several community and faith-based organizations. Generally, I provide capacity-building training and technical supports in community assessment, logic model development, strategic planning, and evaluation. Often, students are also involved with me in providing the community and capacity-building supports, which allows them to begin gaining practical experience in applying community health and development competencies. In this way, community-engaged service supports the scholarship of application.

Although I still engage in more traditional forms of academic service, there are often competing time demands between community-based and traditional academic service activities. I generally participate in broader university service activities that may influence institutional practices and policies related to community-engaged scholarship. As examples of university-level service, I have served on the Community Engagement and Equality Working Group to guide university sustainability activities, the Leadership Studies Steering Committee to inform curriculum development, as a departmental ambassador for the Center for Teaching Excellence, and as a departmental representative for the KU Advocacy Corp, which pairs community agencies with academic departments to support advocacy and outreach.

Structural Challenges and Opportunities to Support Community-Engaged Scholarship

Although I am fortunate to work in a supportive academic environment, I have experienced some tensions in facilitating community-engaged scholarship as an early-career tenure track professor. Initially, when I received my faculty appointment, I was guided by more senior faculty to create some dissonance in my community and academic activities. I received multiple cautions from a variety of colleagues to reduce community-engaged scholarship activities with the guidance of “do what you have to do now, so that you can do what you want to do later.” The subtle message being communicated was to ensure that I was maintaining my publication record, and then post-tenure I could enjoy the benefits of academic freedom (i.e., community-engaged scholarship). The discouragement by senior colleagues to not pursue engaged scholarship activities until post-tenure is common advice for tenure-track faculty (Foster 2012, 22). The feedback from senior colleagues is not ill-intentioned but is rather an attempt to ensure the success and matriculation of tenure-track faculty in academia based on the structural system, which often may not have mechanisms to holistically evaluate CES as part of the RPT process. However, as a community-based participatory researcher with already established community partnerships and commitments, it was not appropriate to subdue community engagement activities.

During my first couple of years as a tenure-track professor, the University of Kansas was beginning to engage in preliminary dialogues regarding engaged scholarship for

public impact. Since this time, there have been intentional efforts at the University of Kansas to examine engaged scholarship as part of the institutional strategic planning process. For instance, at the University of Kansas there were forums, planning sessions, and funding mechanisms to support interdisciplinary strategic initiatives, which did enhance collaboration and activity in the scholarship of integration. However, although engaged scholarship was conceptually embraced by university administration, there was not necessarily a clear and consistent definition and a mutual understanding of engaged scholarship across multiple levels of the university. In general, the linear view of faculty responsibilities was maintained in the structural systems, which results in the independent assessment of research, teaching, and service as discrete activities, which may limit fully understanding the integrated contributions of community-engaged scholars (Saltmarsh et al. 2009, 32). I participated on several campus-based community engagement work groups that recommended strategies to translate and promote cultural practices within departments and units. The university has interest in supporting structural interventions and transformations, but it will take time to fully integrate various strategies for evaluating and promoting CES across multiple levels and systems.

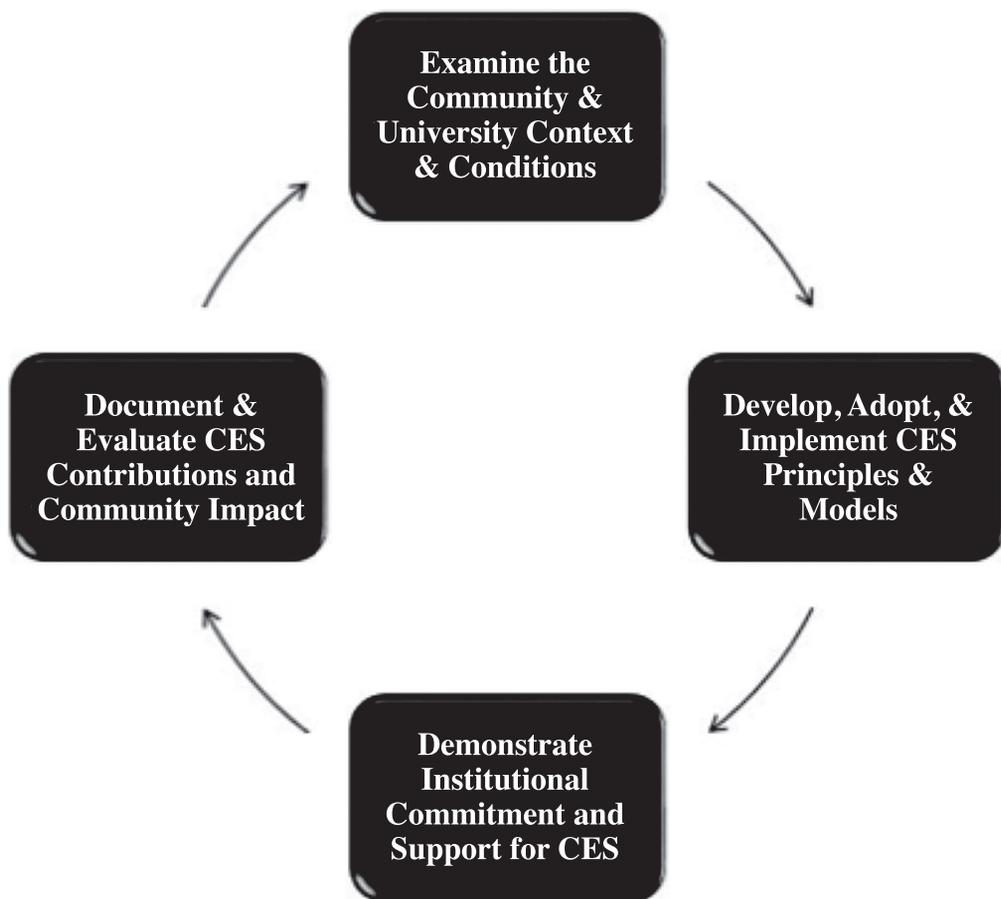
As an early career tenure-track professor, I would have been less likely to have embraced community-engaged scholarship if I had not been previously reinforced by meaningful CES partnerships and experiences as a graduate student and early career researcher. At pivotal times in my career, I received critical supports from the KU Center for Civic and Social Responsibility and the Center for Teaching Excellence, which provided me with both collegial validation and a peer network of support as an engaged scholar. As an early career tenure-track professor, opportunities for external validation of CES, such as through the Campus Compact and Ernest A. Lynton awards, are also important in further recognizing efforts to advance the scholarship of engagement. The collaborative efforts supported by the New England Resource Center for Higher Education (NERCHE), the Center for Engaged Democracy, and the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities has provided opportunities to extend my network of engaged scholars and supported an enhanced and renewed commitment to contributing to advancing CES. The Lynton award also provided opportunities to broker communications with university leaders at KU, including Chancellor Bernadette Gray-Little and Dean Danny Anderson, regarding the continued value of CES on campus, which also helped to further validate the merit of community engagement as part of the university mission.

Recommendations to Further Advance Community-Engaged Scholarship

Based on my experience, I will propose some considerations for how academic institutions may further support a culture of community-engaged scholarship. Figure 2 presents four factors or enabling conditions that may be helpful in addressing potential barriers to engaged scholarship. As shown in the model, first it is important for academic institutions to collectively examine the community context and conditions

that may promote or impede community engagement at academic institutions and in communities. Next, colleges and universities should be proactive in developing, adopting, and implementing both principles and models of community-engaged scholarship. Then, it is critical to demonstrate institutional commitment and support for community engagement at multiple levels of the university including within schools, departments, and other academic units. Lastly, academic institutions should ensure clear mechanisms for documenting, measuring, and evaluating the collective contributions of university partners in facilitating engaged scholarship for community impact.

Figure 2. Enabling factors or conditions that academic institutions can support in advancing community-engaged scholarship



Examine the Community and University Context and Conditions

For disenfranchised communities and groups, particularly in urban areas, it is critical that academic institutions support conditions to sustain academic engagement and commitment in a place, over time, and across people. Many urban areas have been characterized by historical disinvestment, which has resulted in inequities and disparities in outcomes including education, income, employment, housing, health, and safety. Years of systemic inequities in conditions and communities cannot be ameliorated without a commitment of strategic investment in concentrated places over time. Colleges and universities have the opportunity to be anchor institutions that “persist in communities over generations, serving as social glue, economic engines, or both” (Cantor, Englot, and Higgins 2013, 20). Universities are strategically positioned to serve as anchor institutions that bring interdisciplinary collaborators together through public and private partnerships (Coalition of Urban Serving Universities 2010). As anchor institutions, university-based community-engagement efforts cannot be here today and gone tomorrow, or we further perpetuate the negative histories already experienced in many communities, particularly in urban settings.

For some academic institutions, such as regional major research institutions, there may be reluctance to commit to strategic investments in defined communities due to political constraints. However, the potential for community impact through interdisciplinary initiatives and community collaboration is minimized when there is a lack of university commitment and coordination of activities in prioritized communities. The prioritization of communities by academic institutions does not suggest that faculty, staff, and administrators cannot continue to engage in a variety of community settings, but rather that intentional opportunities are sought to coordinate commitment and investments in strategic places within and across communities. Often, there are multiple faculty or researchers engaged in the same communities and working with mutual community partners; however, the academic supports and resources provided in communities are often uncoordinated, which limits the ability of colleges and universities to understand their collective contribution in supporting change and improvement in communities. Urban communities provide rich opportunities for co-learning through CES because of the highly dense concentration of residents and organizations that can collaborate through university partnerships.

It is important that academic-based faculty and personnel engage in collaborative processes to understand the setting, context, and conditions of prioritized communities in which they work or endeavor to engage. Prior to involvement with prioritized communities and groups, academic partners should examine the community factors including the cultural, geographical, and political histories of the community. The academic partner should be immersed as the community learner with the endeavor to be “local,” which provides an opportunity for academicians and administrators not only to learn the community, but also to take the role as learner first. According to Mark Smith (1994, 125),

[Being local] involves learning in detail about the participants [the community], their lives, their histories, and their relationships to one another. It includes learning the characteristics that define a place [or group]: family, neighborhood, community culture Being local is a skill used for community connection, often between educational institutions and local communities.

Occasioning opportunities to learn about the community from and with community partners shifts the locus of expertise from the academic to the community partner(s) and will enhance the cultural knowledge and awareness of university personnel. However, such a learning process would require a commitment and investment of time from university faculty and administrators to permit the academician to be a learner first, which is not generally permitted by RPT and other constraints.

It is also important to examine and understand the history of engagement in the community, including prior and existing community-academic partnerships and activities. For instance, in my community leadership course, students develop digital stories, brief multimedia narratives with community-based partners to document and promote their collaborative community leadership efforts. For some community partners, the digital stories have been helpful in both recording community and organizational history and communicating their successes to others. Similarly, digital stories or brief informational videos developed with community partner groups through multidisciplinary service-learning collaborations could be components of new faculty, staff, and student orientations.

Developing and Implementing CES Principles and Models

For most colleges and universities, community-engaged scholarship is a value that supports their public mission. As a value, academic institutions recognize and communicate the importance of CES as important for supporting research, teaching, and service activities. However, for many campuses, shifting CES from a core value to a guiding principle requires demonstrable support and modifications to university practices and policies, particularly in regard to faculty reward systems. In 2014, the annual conference for the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities was held at Syracuse University. I was delighted to receive the Lynton award at a university that has institutionally prioritized and demonstrated the scholarship of engagement. However, for many institutions the scholarship of integration, which supports an interdisciplinary approach to engaged scholarship is yet evolving.

Ultimately, universities endeavor to contribute to improving population-level health and development outcomes such as poverty, violence, chronic disease, environmental justice, and a host of other issues. Effective problem-solving to address the confluence of urban issues requires a multi-sectoral and interdisciplinary approach to address the interrelated factors that challenges health and development, particularly in urban settings. Many of the efforts singly addressed by academicians in departmental silos

are synergistic with other research and service efforts also occurring in the same university and community. When university efforts in a community are uncoordinated, it poses a barrier to participation and collaboration by community partners. Therefore, it is important to ensure conditions that promote a coordination of resources, internal and external information sharing, and systematic examination of university-based efforts to better understand collective contributions and engagement in communities.

Academic institutions should develop, adopt, and implement a framework for community-engaged scholarship that validates and supports an institutional approach. The implementation of a CES framework may assist in guiding academic institutions in the process of engaged scholarship. Furthermore, the operationalization of CES activities may enhance understanding for both new and existing faculty for how to support, recognize, and evaluate CES activities. An institutional approach to CES, promotes intra-university collaboration across disciplines, faculty, and students, as well as with community partners. A university-level approach to CES promotes integrated and collaborative scholarship activities across disciplinary fields and units (e.g., student affairs, multicultural affairs, admissions) within the university.

Using the Participatory Evaluation Framework for Collaborative Action to Guide CES

The Participatory Evaluation Framework for Collaborative Action (see Figure 1) was presented earlier in this paper. Although this model has been used primarily to examine participatory evaluation and community change processes, it also may support community-engaged scholarship more broadly, particularly at the institutional level. According to Cantor, Englot, and Higgins (2013, 20), “an essential first step in making the work of universities as anchor institutions stick is creating a model of reciprocal, participatory engagement.” The framework offers a process for systematically examining the collective contributions of CES in supporting improvements in prioritized community-level outcomes.

In the first phase of the model, university and community-based partners are collaboratively engaged in determining the prioritized goals and issues to be addressed through CES. Academic and community-based partners work jointly to assess the assets as well as needs or issues present in the community. As a part of the assessment process, multiple academic disciplines and community sectors are involved in the process of identifying, collecting, analyzing, and interpreting information. The mission and type of academic institution will influence the parameters for how the community of place is defined, which may be as bounded as a neighborhood, or as expansive as a state or region. The aim of the assessment process is to engage both university and community partners in determining the socioeconomic priorities to be addressed through CES. Furthermore, the community needs and resources assessment can help to better ensure that faculty, staff, and students are meaningfully contributing to community-determined areas of support through engaged scholarship activities. Based on the collective prioritization of goals, community and university partners

collaboratively name and frame the issues to be supported through CES. The way an issue is named and framed determines how it will be supported and by whom from the community and academic institution.

Based on a participatory approach, both community and academic partners contribute to identifying and examining appropriate research questions of mutual interest. The identification of institutional-level research interests is not intended to limit the autonomy of academic partners, but rather permits systematic examination of the collective impact of CES. Then, the development of a logic model and plan by academic and community partners supports a coordinated CES approach. Generally, a logic model summarizes the inputs including the resources and CES activities or strategies to be supported by both academic and community partners. Based on the activities, the logic model also specifies related outputs and results, as well as the intended impact outcomes of CES activities. The logic model may be more fully explicated through the development of a community engagement strategic plan. The CES approach summarized in the logic model and related plan should be guided by multiple levels of community and campus participation including from community stakeholders, particularly from underrepresented or often overlooked groups, as well as students, faculty, and staff.

In the second phase of the model, collaborative action is facilitated to support implementation of the activities and strategies identified through the logic model and plan. The activities supported in this phase by academic and community partners may include the implementation of research interventions, service-learning and outreach activities, and/or community-engaged service by faculty, staff, or students. Targeted action supports the implementation of community and systems changes, defined as new or modified programs, policies, or practices. It is important that methods are identified to systematically document and measure both the community-engagement process and the implementation of community-level interventions. The systematic documentation of community engagement activities (phase two) and contributions to community and system changes (phase three) permits examination of how the academic and community environment are contributing to improvements in community-level outcomes. As data are collected from both community and academic partners regarding community engagement activities and outcomes, it is important to collaboratively share and review the data. Then, the data should be used to guide adjustments and inform decision-making by both community and university partners. Ultimately, community engagement activities and interventions supported through community-university partnerships are elements of a comprehensive multicomponent intervention to change and improve community conditions. However, academic institutions often do not take advantage of the opportunity to systematically examine the collective contribution of community-academic efforts in a strategic place.

In the fourth and fifth phases, the implementation of community/system changes contributes to widespread changes in behaviors of individuals and groups (both in academia and the community), which results in improvements in community-level outcomes. The simplest, but possibly most commonly overlooked, aspect of the model

is then to ensure opportunities for community and academic partners to jointly celebrate and communicate successes to audiences and key stakeholders. The collaborative celebration of shared community-academic successes through mechanisms that are mutually agreed upon and collaborative reinforcement builds a positive history for CES. Community-determined approaches for engaging community and academic partners through community-university collaborations have demonstrated effectiveness in improving urban conditions (Coalition of Urban Serving Universities 2010).

Demonstrate Institutional Commitment and Support for CES

The institutional history and commitment for investing in priority communities served by a college or university should transcend and endure past any individual administration, faculty, staff, or student. For example, when supporting service-learning student placements with community partners, as the instructor, I broker the student placements with community partners to ensure appropriateness of fit, support mechanisms for student and community partner feedback, as well as to maintain rapport with the community partners. Although it requires more upfront time by the instructors, this support ensures that the relationship with the community partner is not contingent on any individual student. Furthermore, I am also able to manage the placement of students with community sites to not inundate community partners with duplicative service-learning student requests. Similarly, community engagement at colleges and universities is enhanced by coordinated university supports. Then, the quality and value of community-academic partnerships and CES activities is not as contingent on funding mechanisms or individual relationships between academic and community partners.

Institutionalizing CES requires a university culture that supports and reinforces community engagement across multiple levels of the university system, including university administration, schools, colleges, and departments. Although many academic institutions seemingly value engaged scholarship, there is a clear and persistent disconnect in its merit based on the academic reward systems, particularly at research universities. At colleges and universities where CES is a principle, community engagement is an institutional expectation, rather than option, and is apparent by structural processes such as in the annual merit and RPT processes. Saltmarsh et al. (2009, 28) suggests that “community engaged scholarship redefines what constitutes a ‘publication’ and redefines who is a ‘peer’ in the peer review process.” For instance, the submission of letters for RPT tenure dossiers from community partners as peer experts would be an indicator of institutional commitment to CES.

Colleges and universities should identify and commit to structural changes (i.e., programs, policies, and practices) that support CES. Foster (2012, 24) suggests that “structural interventions can come from campus units that value community-engaged scholarship, from scientific and academic leadership organizations, and from the federal government.” It is paramount to identify incentives not just for individual scholars but also for mid-level administrators such as department chairs who often influence

departmental practices and norms, including merit evaluation and RPT processes. For instance, group-based recognition and awards (e.g., honor rolls) for departments or units that support community engagement within academic settings may facilitate broader support and prioritization, particularly if the information were available to prospective students and majors. Also, institutional supports such as CES post-docs or fellows who could assist faculty in developing or coordinating CES activities may offer a critical support that may enhance CES activities of multiple faculty within a unit. Furthermore, permitting opportunities and supports for non-faculty staff to support community engagement activities may further permit a culture of engagement across multiple levels of personnel. For example, a campus that promotes a culture of community engagement may implement flex time policies that allow staff to engage in community advocacy and engagement activities. At the University of Kansas, the majority of advocates in the KU Advocacy Corp, coordinated by the Center for Civic and Social Responsibility, are staff-level personnel. The KU Advocacy Corp pairs community organizations with university faculty, staff, and students to broker community-university engagement and advocacy supports.

Another clear indicator of campus commitment to CES is through program degree requirements. Many four-year colleges and universities have successfully integrated requirements for community engagement, generally in the form of service-learning, as a core component of undergraduate training. Similarly, over the past couple of decades, community colleges have increasingly integrated service-learning in the curriculum requirements (Prentice and Robinson 2010). However, there are often less direct requirements for CES as a core component and requirement of graduate training programs. It is strategic to expose and train graduate students in the process and importance of community-engaged scholarship as the next generation of engaged scholars, tenure-track faculty, and administrators. A longer-term approach to shifting the campus culture and perception of CES is to train future academic leaders and scholars in this area. For example, at the University of Kansas, all doctoral students must fulfill research and responsible scholarship requirements as a part of the graduate program. Although departments specify the criteria for satisfactory completion of this requirement, common elements are generally demonstrating competency or the completion of courses in ethics and responsible scholarship in conducting research. An example of an institutional change supporting CES would be to expand options to fulfill the requirement that include courses or experiences in community-engaged scholarship as an additional option or explicit type of responsible scholarship.

Document and Evaluate CES Contributions and Community Impact

A common challenge experienced by many universities is how to systematically document and examine, across disciplines and interventions, the collective contributions of CES to support transformation in communities. Often times, there are multiple and simultaneous campus-supported research and service efforts occurring within a concentrated community. Although CES efforts may serve the same populations and

contribute to similar or complementary community-level outcomes, there is often not a centralized process for documenting campus-based inputs, including the investment of academic resources and activities supported in communities. Therefore, academic institutions would benefit from regarding community-engaged scholarship activities as a comprehensive community intervention.

The development and implementation of community-based logic models and plans are important for identifying the short- and longer-term outcomes intended to be impacted by CES, including knowledge and skill attainment, attitudes and perception changes, and behavior changes occurring in both the community and on campus. Both the process and outcomes of community-academic partnerships are important to document and examine. For many academic institutions, CES-related activities such as service-learning are at least noted in strategic plans at some level. However, it is often less clear how CES contributions and impact on student learning and community outcomes is measured and evaluated.

Although many colleges and universities recognize the importance of community-university partnerships, it is less clear how to systematically evaluate the collective contributions and impact of community engagement. Often times, community-university partnerships are organic and develop incrementally over time based on individual faculty and/or staff interests, commitment, and resources. Aggregate efforts to improve communities are generally not well documented or examined within and across academic units. A need persists to refine approaches for systematically examining both the process and collective outcomes of community engagement. Systematic methods and measures of community engagement would allow both academic and community partners to understand the collective contribution of community-university partnerships in transforming communities.

The reflective process occasioned by the Lynton award application process and awardee presentations has provided me with the opportunity to reflect on how to enhance CES practice in my own work. An area that I am eager to further advance in promoting community-engaged scholarship at my academic institution, and more broadly in the field, is in the documentation and evaluation of CES activities. For example, in the courses I instruct, students complete service-learning activity logs and reflective processes through online discussion boards and poster presentations. However, I have not instituted a systematic data collection system to support the quantification and deeper analyses of student inputs and outcomes across courses and over semesters. Similarly, for the participatory research collaborations that I support, I work with partners to systematically document their efforts to facilitate community change and service activities, but have often overlooked also documenting the academic inputs provided to community partners such as through capacity-building training and technical support.

Based on my work with the KU Work Group for Community Health and Development, I am pretty well versed in developing community-level data collection and evaluation systems to document and measure the process and impact of

community-based interventions. For instance, our research center has supported a community-academic partnership with the local public health department to facilitate the implementation of a community health assessment and plan that is being implemented in the community through multi-sector collaboration. Through this process, my colleagues have collaborated with the health department and community partners to implement a community-level data collection and reporting system to document community and system changes (i.e., program, policy and practice changes) and service activities being implemented across the community. The system provides a community accessible portal to record and analyze activities implemented by multiple partners, including the health department, public housing authority, and public schools, contributing to improving community-level health outcomes. Our primary focus has been on ensuring that the community story and contributions to change and improvement are systematically recorded. However, we had not yet considered how to also support systematic data collection of the academic-based inputs in the community that may also be supporting the community transformation and improvement process.

Now, in this semester, I will begin to work with both academic and community-based partners to align documentation practices to permit a more holistic examination of both the community and university-based activities contributing to implementing strategies to support community health improvement. For instance, as a pilot project, I will modify the reporting practices in my courses to support integration with the community data collection system. By supporting a practice change in student service and outreach reporting in my course, we will at least be able to better understand how nearly 100 students contribute to supporting community health strategies and outcomes through community-engaged service activities.

In the strongest form, CES can enhance the capacity, or collective skills, capabilities, and resources, of both academic and community partners. However, it is critical to continue to identify approaches to measure the community and academic impact of community capacity and change processes on both community and university (such as student learning) outcomes. Through intra-disciplinary collaboration, we have the potential to develop strong systems and approaches for examining the process and outcomes of community-academic partnerships. Many disciplines such as community psychology, public health, education, applied behavioral analysis, social work, urban planning, and many more are well-positioned to contribute to our collective understanding of how to measure CES process and outcomes. There are already established constructs and measures for concepts such as community capacity, community and self-efficacy, community-based participatory research, social validation of goal attainment, and community change and transformation processes and outcomes, which could be adapted for this context. However, what is absent is not the ability to measure and examine CES, but the integrated framework that guides what and how we should measure our collective efforts to demonstrate and evidence collective impact and contributions to improvements in communities.

Conclusion

In addressing the plethora of health and development issues that often plagues our communities, we must continue to advance CES through the scholarship of discovery, integration, teaching, and application (Boyer 1996, 17; Lynton 1994, 11). In many communities, a confluence of factors, often related to structural determinants including historical and social policies and socioeconomic disparities in education, employment, housing, and access to resources, including social capital, continues to challenge the collective health and development of communities. Despite the varied problems experienced in communities, there are many assets including human and institutional resources that are critical in addressing the social and physical ills that perplex our society. Colleges and universities are key institutions that are uniquely positioned to contribute to addressing some of the underlying factors of structural and socioeconomic determinants. However, community partners are best positioned to reify and validate the importance, utility, and effectiveness of our interventions, which is ultimately evidenced by community adoption, implementation, and sustainability. I am reminded of the quote by George Berkley that states, “If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?” In parallel, I now ask you, if we, as academicians, do good scholarly work that is published and academically reputable, but it is not shared, known, or implemented by practitioners in applied settings and in communities, then did our scholarly work ever really exist?

Based on an ecological perspective, the ability of colleges and universities to fulfill their research, teaching, and service missions is embedded within the process of supporting transformation and improvements in communities. Academic institutions offer a resource-rich environment, with a hub of individuals committed to addressing some of our most complex societal problems. As academicians, we are expected to contribute to advancing knowledge that is shared with students and scholars in our respective disciplines. However, it is as important that we ensure that we are good stewards of our knowledge and resources, which means ensuring that our academic institutions most directly and immediately contribute to improvements in the communities in which we work and live.

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