Community Engagement Plans: A Tool for Institutionalizing Community Engagement

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Abstract

The University of Louisville guided the development of community engagement plans by its academic and administrative units to strengthen their ability to assess and improve their partnership, outreach, and engaged scholarship with community partners. Using a common template, each unit developed a process for engaging with the community, building on its particular strengths and interests. The engagement plans serve as a road map to get each unit engaged with the larger community and institutionalize engagement across the university. Discussion centers around the template used to develop the engagement plans and the role they play in institutionalizing community engagement. A further look is taken at the process used to develop and implement the plans as well as some of the challenges and opportunities that were encountered along the way.

Keywords: community engagement plans, institutionalizing community engagement, template, assessment

Higher education was challenged to address communities' most pressing needs in what Boyer (1996) referred to as a reaffirmation of its "historic commitment" (p. 11). He made a call for engagement, urging higher education institutions to partner with their communities in search of solutions to our most pressing community issues. This challenge was further emphasized when the Kellogg Commission (1999) issued a report calling on higher education to do more and go beyond outreach and service in what the commission referred to as "engagement." The commission urged that teaching, research, and service be redesigned to better address social concerns. Institutions that rose to this challenge and committed to mutually beneficial partnerships with their communities are known as "engaged institutions" (Kellogg Commission, 1999, p. 1). Colleges and universities have taken up this challenge to strengthen the town–gown relationship in an effort to address the challenges facing their towns and cities (Harkavy & Zuckerman, 1999; Taylor & Luter, 2013). Much progress has been made with the infusion of engagement into the curriculum through service–learning or community-based learning courses, engaged scholarship, and outreach and partnership; however, full institutionalization of community engagement into the fabric of the institution is not always achieved.

For community engagement to be institutionalized, it must be transformational, conforming to Eckel et al.'s (1998) definition. This article explores how academic and administrative units' community engagement plans can institutionalize community engagement on campus, leading to a transformational change. It looks at how the engagement plans are intentionally tied to institutional priorities, explores the process used to develop the engagement plans, and describes strategies to get the respective units on board. The challenges encountered during the process and lessons

learned are also discussed.

The University of Louisville, a large, metropolitan, very high research activity (R1) institution located in Kentucky's largest urban area, is positioned to take another step in institutionalizing community engagement. It has a long history of involvement in the community through its professional schools and colleges and the many partnerships with the local school district, the city of Louisville, the Metro United Way, the Urban League, and other organizations. In 2006, the Signature Partnership initiative was developed in collaboration with community stakeholders to address areas of health, education, economic development, and social and human services. It involves every school and college and several administrative units in engaged scholarship, teaching, and outreach initiatives (Cunningham et al., 2015). The university's commitment to community engagement is evident in its mission statement, which includes the phrase "providing engaged service and outreach that improve the quality of life for local and global communities" (University of Louisville, 2016). A vice president for community engagement directly reports to the president, and the Office of the Vice President for Community Engagement is charged with leading the university in partnering with community entities in mutually beneficial ways to address the needs and interests of our diverse communities locally, statewide, nationally, and internationally through engaged research, teaching, and service. With the assistance of a community engagement steering committee comprising faculty, administrators, and students and a university–community advisory board made up of community and university leaders, the University of Louisville was able to develop and implement policies and procedures as well as initiatives to guide and enhance its engagement with the community. This commitment to engagement was evident in the university's receiving the Carnegie community engagement classification in 2008 and reclassification in 2015. As a result, the University of Louisville was well positioned to take another step in institutionalizing community engagement.

Although there appears to be limited literature on the institutionalization of community engagement, Furco (2000, 2002) and Kecskes (2008a) discussed institutionalization of service-learning through various self-assessment rubrics, and Holland (1997) developed the Holland matrix for assessing institutional commitment to engagement. All three of these authors designed their respective assessment instruments for institutions to assess the degree of engagement either at the departmental level or across the institution. Sandmann et al. (2009) argued that it is critical for higher education to "engage with its community in authentic, mutually beneficial partnerships" (p. 1) as they analyzed the progress represented in the first wave of community-engaged institutions classified by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. For community engagement to be institutionalized, it must be part of the fabric of the institution and be embedded in its culture and priorities. Otherwise, it runs the risk of losing momentum or being disregarded altogether upon changes in administration.

Proponents of community engagement present several reasons why this work is important and should be institutionalized. Bringle and Hatcher (2000), in citing the work of others, argued that a greater emphasis on engaged scholarship can impact faculty work, enhance student learning, and improve the town–gown relationship. The Kellogg Commission (1999) also supported university–community partnerships, stating that at the heart of community engagement is the development of partnerships between the campus and the community. The AASCU Task Force on Public Engagement (2002), in its guide to leading public engagement at state colleges and universities, stated that engagement must, like other mission priorities, be embedded in the fabric of the institution if it is to achieve the Kellogg Commission's vision of being an engaged institution.

Bringle and Hatcher (2000) and Driscoll (2014) supported this argument, stating that institutionalization of community engagement must be evident in the identity of the institution and embedded in its culture. A commitment to community engagement must be reflected in the mission statements of colleges and universities (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000, 2002; Cunningham et al., 2015; Driscoll, 2014; Franz et al., 2012; Furco, 2010; Furco & Miller, 2009; Kecskes, 2008a; Kellogg Commission, 1999). Beere et al. (2011) discussed the significance of mission statements in relation to community engagement. They argued that mission statements provide the rationale, direction,

motivation, and commitment for the institution to involve itself in community-engaged work. Another factor that must be taken into consideration for community engagement to be fully institutionalized is the support of administration (Furco & Holland, 2009; Kellogg Commission, 1999). This support should be evident through infrastructure and financial resources, which sends a strong message to faculty, staff, students, and the community that engagement with the community is taken seriously and is encouraged. Having a centralized office (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Kecskes, 2008a; Leiderman et al., 2003) to coordinate community engagement work across the institution is important; it demonstrates that such work is a university-wide effort, not a movement or interest of a particular department or individual.

Several factors aid in the institutionalization of community engagement. Key among them is building the infrastructure. Bringle and Hatcher (2000), in discussing the institutionalization of service-learning and building on the work of Morton and Troppe (1996), stated that institutionalization is multifaceted and must be connected to the mission statement, presidential leadership, budget allocation, and infrastructure, among other things. In further exploring infrastructure, Bringle and Hatcher stated that having a centralized office to coordinate university-wide service-learning initiatives is a key aspect of institutionalization. Beere et al. (2011) supported the concept of a centralized office with a high-level administrator who reflects the views of the president and chief academic officer. Campus leadership can greatly strengthen the infrastructure by supporting the central office with institutional funds rather than grant money to ensure permanency of the office. Kecskes, (2008b) and Furco (2010) also supported the idea of a centralized office with institutional support.

Institutionalizing Community Engagement Plans

For community engagement plans developed by academic and administrative units to be truly institutionalized, they must be tied to institutional priorities. Like service-learning, they must be tied to mission statements, strategic priorities, and goals (Brackin & Gibson, 2004), as well as broader institutional practices such as achieving student learning outcomes (Furco & Holland, 2009). Connecting community engagement plans with the institution's priorities ensures relevance as well as buy-in from administrators and faculty, who will perceive the plans as important and a mechanism to drive development and implementation of those priorities.

This model focused on having each academic and administrative unit develop its own engagement plan as opposed to having one plan for the entire university. Because of the uniqueness and priorities of each academic and administrative unit, it was considered more effective to have each unit develop its own engagement plan guided by common university-wide goals and a common template. The Office of Community Engagement, along with the community engagement steering committee, comprising faculty, staff, and students, developed the goals to guide the university to further advance community engagement across the campus. The goals resulted from areas the university needed to address following the self-study for the Carnegie classification.

The University of Louisville, in developing its community engagement plans, connected the template for the plans to both the university's mission and institutional priorities. The university's mission statement called for "providing engaged service and outreach that improve the quality of life for local and global communities" (University of Louisville, 2016). The preamble to the community engagement plans mentioned the mission statement and the role the plans would play in helping units fulfill the mission of the institution as a metropolitan research institution. The community engagement plans also factored in the priorities of the institution when the concept of the plans was introduced by the Office of Community Engagement. This was to increase the likelihood that academic deans and vice presidents would support the development of the plans. The first priority connected to the community engagement plans was the university's strategic plan. The strategic plan identified five pillars on which to build the future of the university, one of which was community engagement. The pillars are all connected, with community engagement evident in such pillars as research and diversity and inclusion. The engagement plans were presented as a means to help the university meet the goals laid out in the strategic plan. Consequently, unit engagement plans should reflect the

university's strategic plan. The connection of academic and administrative units' engagement plans to the university's strategic plan is supported by Beere et al. (2011), who argued that units' engagement plans must be monitored for implementation and goals achieved in order to close the loop between the two.

The University of Louisville developed the 21st Century University initiative, the second university priority, which served as a road map to help the university achieve the goals of the strategic plan. The 21st Century initiative laid out specific strategies to accomplish the goals of the strategic plan, many of which were incorporated into the engagement plans. The third university priority to which the engagement plans were connected was the scorecard set by the president to measure progress within the university. Since all units, both academic and administrative, contribute to progress toward the scorecard goals, it made sense to connect the goals of the engagement plans with the goals of the scorecard.

During the self-study that led to the reaffirmation as a community-engaged institution from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the University of Louisville identified several key areas that needed enhancement. Addressing the identified areas would not only help prepare the university for the next round of Carnegie classification reaffirmation but would greatly enhance community engagement on the campus. As a result, the goals listed within the template to guide the development of the engagement plans incorporated the areas that were identified as deficient during the university self-study. The university community was pleased with the Carnegie designation for community engagement and wanted to maintain it; therefore, it was believed they would more likely support a plan that would help in maintaining the classification.

Because community engagement is included in the University of Louisville's strategic plan, as one of its five pillars, the university had to demonstrate to its accrediting body, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), how it was assessing community engagement across the institution. Consequently, the engagement plans developed by each academic and administrative unit were utilized as the mechanism by which such assessment was conducted to ensure compliance. Connecting the engagement plans to the university's accreditation provided further evidence of their importance to the university and why they should be supported by all units to help the university remain in compliance with its accrediting body.

The Process of Developing the Plans

The university's Office of Community Engagement led the effort to develop and implement the engagement plans. The community engagement steering committee, consisting of faculty, staff, students, and administrators, provided feedback and guidance in developing the template for the plans. Getting the endorsement of the steering committee was significant since the members came from both academic and administrative units from across campus. The process was designed so that each academic and administrative unit would develop and implement its own community engagement plan with assistance and guidance from the Office of Community Engagement, leading to institutionalization of the effort across the entire university. This model allows units to determine how they will commit to and fulfill their role in community engagement (Beere et al., 2011). A draft of the engagement plan template developed by the community engagement steering committee was shared with a few key deans to get their input and support before it was shared with all the academic deans. Not only did this select group of deans provide valuable feedback that improved the template, they endorsed the idea of the engagement plans. Getting the support of key deans played a significant role in the plans' implementation. Their familiarity with the template and their support for it was critical when it was presented to the council of academic deans. Because this select group of deans spoke in favor of the template and the development of units' engagement plans, it was easier to get the remaining deans' support for the plans as an important mechanism to enhance and advance community engagement on campus.

Development of units' engagement plans was given a 2-year time frame from initiation to implementation. On being provided with the template and instructions to draft their engagement plans, units were allowed a year to complete this exercise, to enable unit heads to consult with faculty and staff

in their respective schools, colleges, and offices. At the end of the first year, the completed drafts of the engagement plans were submitted to the Office of Community Engagement for review and feedback. Over a period of several months, feedback was provided to each unit. This included individual meetings with each dean and vice president and detailed emails about the plans. All unit heads were given another year to revise their engagement plan based on the feedback provided and with further consultation with their respective unit. Final feedback was provided on the second draft of the engagement plans before they were implemented.

Goals of the Community Engagement Plans

In creating the planning process, it was important to provide a set of standardized goals to help leadership at the units understand the purpose of the engagement plans in connecting their work to the overall goals of the university as articulated in the university's strategic plan and the 21st Century University initiative. In addition, the goals would help to address deficiencies as identified by the self-study for the Carnegie classification.

Goals for Academic Units

The template for the academic units outlined four key goals: (1) promote engaged scholarship opportunities; (2) promote engagement in the Signature Partnership initiative; (3) promote local, state, national, and international engagement; and (4) promote documentation, assessment, and accountability in engagement.

Promote Engaged Scholarship Opportunities. The university is committed to excellence in engaged scholarly work and working across the university to increase engaged research and teaching activities with community partners. Establishing goals for units in the plan around engaged scholarship helps them connect core mission elements involving research and teaching with their engagement efforts in the community. The hope is that through explicitly planning and striving toward targets related to resourcing and recognition for engaged scholarship, units will continue to improve in the quantity and quality of this work.

Promote Engagement in the Signature Partnership Initiative. The Signature Partnership initiative is a strategic university effort to enhance the quality of life and economic opportunity for residents in our urban core. The goal is to work with various community partners to improve the education, health, wellness, and social status of individuals and families who live in this geographical area of the city. Working closely with community residents, the Jefferson County Public Schools, the Metro Government, Metro United Way, the Urban League, faith-based organizations, and many others, the university has coordinated and enhanced existing programs and launched new programs designed to eliminate or reduce disparities experienced by residents in education, health, and economic and social conditions. The university draws upon the expertise and energy of faculty, staff, and students from every academic and administrative unit for this initiative (University of Louisville, Office of Community Engagement, 2018). As a major initiative to address the university's metropolitan mission of service, it is imperative that work related to the Signature Partnership initiative be included in the engagement plans.

Promote Local, State, National, and International Engagement. In adopting the Carnegie definition for community engagement, which defines community as local, national, and international (Swearer Center, Brown University, 2018), the work of the university must include all these geographical areas. This inclusiveness is in line with a core component of the overall mission of the university to collaboratively address community issues locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. Through strategic alliances and partnerships with public and private groups, the university will share expertise, interest, and scholarship as an involved citizen. Faculty, staff, and students use these community-based interactions to provide educational opportunities and as a vehicle for translational and applied research of university scholars. Given this centrality to the university, the template includes a goal for promoting this work throughout these geographic levels of impact, so that units can look more intentionally at their engagement activities here at home, in projects at state and national levels, and

in communities around the world.

Promote Documentation, Assessment, and Accountability in Engagement. With the development of the engagement plans there was an opportunity to strengthen and better formalize a connected system of measures for community engagement and its impact on students, faculty, the institution, and the community across the university and within units. The central office of community engagement at the university manages an institution-wide data collection process for activities with community partners. The engagement plans offered an opportunity to synchronize that data-collection effort with unit-level systems collecting information. In some cases, the centralized database was able to serve as a primary measure for units as they reported on their goals. The end result at both the institutional level and the unit level was improved documentation and assessment for engagement efforts, and a strong starting point for helping units further improve their ability to account for outcomes at the student, faculty, and community partner levels.

Goals for Administrative Units

The template for the administrative units outlined two key goals: (1) promote community service climate in the unit and (2) promote engagement in the Signature Partnership area. The template also recognized a third type of goal that acknowledges differences among administrative units.

Promote Community Service Climate in the Unit. Because community engagement is a university-wide initiative, it is important that administrative units, acting through staff, be involved in community efforts as well. This particular goal is to ensure that offices across campus are appropriately supportive of having staff members engage in service activities in the community. This goal further supports a university policy of granting staff members community service leave to engage in appropriate community activities.

Promote Engagement in the Signature Partnership Area. As with academic units' involvement in this geographical area, it is important that staff from administrative offices be involved in the Signature Partnership initiative. It is a university-wide effort to enhance the quality of life and economic opportunity for residents in the west Louisville area, emphasizing educational attainment, health, and social and economic issues.

Other Goals Relevant to Your Unit. This third goal was included due to the uniqueness and differences among the administrative offices. The Office of Student Affairs and the Athletics Department are in a position to include students in their engagement with the community, but this is not the case with other offices. This goal enables units to focus on their work and its applicability to issues in the community and how each could connect to the community in a meaningful way.

Categories of the Engagement Plan

Goals

The template for the engagement plan was divided into related categories that stipulated how the plan should be written. Because these categories are all related, they build from each other. The goals are the guiding force of the plan and serve to determine the areas of emphasis and direction units take in developing and implementing their plans to align with university's priorities for engagement.

Strategies

The strategies describe the specific actions, activities, programs, or initiatives that units are undertaking or plan to implement in pursuit of the goals. Units were asked to provide a comprehensive listing of strategies that aligned with each of their goals, with assurance that upcoming or new strategies be practical, feasible, and sustainable.

Outcomes

Although units were asked to be detailed and comprehensive in describing strategies related to each goal, it was recognized that particular units may not have the capacity to align an outcome with every single strategy, assuming units were aligning many multiple strategies to a particular goal. Therefore, units were asked to select one outcome for a chosen strategy. However, units were encouraged to list multiple outcomes if their internal capacity for measurement and reporting was in place.

Assessment and Measurement

The assessment section of the plan details the measuring of outcomes and clearly indicates how progress and accomplishments will be reported. All outcomes described in the plan are required to be measurable through an existing or newly developed assessment or data collection system. Some units provide their own assessment tools, some units utilize data from the central office, and others use a combination of their own data and data collected in university-wide processes. The university's central office for community engagement serves as a source for data from the annual partnership data reporting, as well as other centrally administered assessments and databases, including a biannual survey of community partners, information about curricular engagement courses and enrollment, and results from student assessment of curricular engagement. A new university-wide survey of faculty involvement in community-engaged scholarship is also available for use.

Targets and Progress Reports

Targets for each of the outcomes help units report on the progress toward their goals. In most cases, targets should be quantitative: for example, a percentage or number increase over an established baseline. However, for some outcomes, the target is related to the scheduled implementation of a new project or an effort to change policy related to one of the goals. In these cases the target may simply be establishing a new initiative or policy.

Action Plan

The action plan section requests that units provide a narrative that discusses the "closing of the loop" in each goal area for that year's plan. Units use the findings described in the progress reports to indicate strategies for continuous program improvement to strategically enhance their community engagement efforts. If the targets related to a goal are not met in any area, units are asked to describe what improvements or course corrections will be made in order to meet targets in the following year's progress report. In the areas where the targets are met, units are asked to describe what factors led to success and how that will be supported for meeting targets in the upcoming year. In either case—meeting or not meeting targets related to a goal—units have the flexibility to update or adapt elements of the plan to improve it. Those changes are discussed in the action plan section of the template.

Community Engagement Plans as a Means for Assessment

The engagement plans once developed and implemented become an assessment mechanism. As a measurement of unit-level involvement and progress in community engagement, the Office of Community Engagement and the Office of Academic Planning and Accountability established an annual reporting process for all colleges, schools, and applicable administrative units to provide updates on goals, strategies, and targets for the assessment of the unit's community engagement mission. These annual update reports indicate the extent to which units are making progress in meeting the target set for each goal and the plan of action they will undertake in the next academic year. Table 1 and Table 2 are examples of update reports utilizing the common template that are submitted to the Office of Community Engagement for review.

Lessons Learned

Transformational processes are slow and complex and bring many unexpected consequences. The process of introducing the development and implementation of community engagement plans by all academic and administrative units within the university brought with it some challenges, both expected and unexpected; consequently, many lessons were learned.

University Leadership Must be on Board With Building the Institutional Foundation

One of the most important lessons learned is that the university leadership must be supportive of any transformative change that occurs. For a university-wide, unit-level engagement planning process to get off the ground, the central administration and the deans of schools and colleges must all agree and be in support of the effort. A major enabling factor for the university was the inclusion of community "engaged service" as a part of the overall mission. This mission component filters through every school and college of the university, and administrators and deans understand

Table 1. A Progress Report Submitted by an Academic Unit						
Goals	Strategies/Tactics	Anticipated Outcome	Measure	Targets	Progress Report	Action Plan
	Identify efforts being made to promote engaged scholarship	*What do you expect to be the outcome of your efforts?*	*The method by which you plan to measure or assess progress in achieving your outcome for this goal*	*What are the targets related to the outcome? In most cases, targets should be quantitative. For example, a percent or number increase over an established baseline*	*Indicate progress on the target or targets under Goal 1 made during the academic year*	*This provides evidence of "closing the loop" by utilizing the results described in your findings to indicate strategies for continuous program improvement to enhance community engagement efforts of your unit*
1. Promote engaged scholarship opportunities	Identify and publicize resources for faculty and student development in the area of community-engaged scholarship.	Increased number of courses integrating practice experience	University records of practice-engaged (community-based learning) designated courses	Increase in practice-engaged courses 10% over baseline	Last year there were 12 undergraduate courses and 11 graduate courses offered that included practice-based experience. This year there were 5 undergraduate courses and 23 graduate courses offered that included practice-based experience	As we are in the process of reaccreditation, the curriculum is undergoing significant revision. The number of practice-engaged courses at the graduate level reflects that our master's programs are practice based. That is expected to remain the same despite the revisions

Table 1. A Progress Report Submitted by an Academic Unit *continued*						
Goals	Strategies/Tactics	Anticipated Outcome	Measure	Targets	Progress Report	Action Plan
2. Promote engagement in the Signature Partnership initiative	Develop engagement opportunities for faculty, staff, and students in target area	Continuing presence in the Signature Partnership initiative target area	Use data from University Community Engagement database	10 projects will be initiated in the targeted area	12 projects were initiated in the targeted area this academic year	Long–term ties with community are being supported to ensure sustainability of partnerships
3. Promote local, state, national, & international engagement	Communicate to department chairs the need to direct faculty to include community engagement activities on their annual work plans and specifically those considered "local"	An increase in overall number of "local" community engagement activities outlined in annual faculty work plans	Use of community engagement activities reported in this year and last year faculty annual work plans to compare amount of "local" community engagement	Next academic year, the college will increase its overall "local" community engagement activities outlined on its annual faculty work plans by 5 percentage points over last year	The College experienced an 8.6% increase over the number of local community engagement actiities reported over previous year	Since the target was met, the College will work to maintain the same level of commitment to the community in the next academic year
4. Promote documentation, assessment, and accountability in engagement	Coordinate a demonstration of how to record activities in the database for faculty by the staff in the Office of Community Engagement	Inform and educate faculty about the importance and simplicity of documenting their community engagement activities in the Office of Community Engagement database	Compare the number of community engagement activities reported by faculty in the last and current academic years	Faculty members will be intentional about reporting their commu–nity engagement activities in the database. As a result, the College will experience a 5 percent increase in the number of activities reported last year	This year the College experienced a 48% increase over the number of community engagement activities reported in the previous year	Continuous support will be provided to faculty to ensure the level of activities reported remains high

Table 2. A Progress Report Submitted by an Administrative Unit						
Goals	**Strategies/Tactics**	**Anticipated Outcome**	**Measure**	**Targets**	**Progress Report**	**Action Plan**
	Identify efforts being made to promote engaged scholarship	*What do you expect to be the outcome of your efforts?*	*The method by which you plan to measure or assess progress in achieving your outcome for this goal*	*What are the targets related to the outcome? In most cases, targets should be quantitative. For example, a percent or number increase over an established baseline*	*Indicate progress on the target or targets under Goal 1 made during the academic year*	*This provides evidence of "closing the loop" by utilizing the results described in your findings to indicate strategies for continuous program improvement to enhance community engagement efforts of your unit*
Promote community service climate in the unit	Highlight and recognize staff participation in community service in the Unit newsletter	Recognition of staff will lead to increased participation in community service activities	Numbers reported in the Community Partner Database will provide figures	Highlight at least two staff members per year	One staff member was highlighted in the Unit newsletter and one recognized with President's Volunteer Service Award. There were 26 instances of staff activities	Now that the division collects service hours from each area as part of our annual reporting process, it is easier to report. We will change the target for next year to getting 25% of Unit staff to participate in a service project during the University service week

Table 2. A Progress Report Submitted by an Administrative Unit continued

Goals	Strategies/Tactics	Anticipated Outcome	Measure	Targets	Progress Report	Action Plan
Promote engagement in the Signature Partnership area	Develop new partnership as part of the Signature Partnership initiative	There will be new and additional partnerships as part of the Signature Partnership initiative	Numbers reported in the Community Partner Database will provide figures	Develop one new community partner as part of the Signature Partnership initiative	Connected with two partners to reignite former relationship with them. They had been partners in the past, but the relationship had dropped off over the past few years. Invited them to renew partnership	We were able to take time to visit the agencies in person and learn about what they offer and how volunteers could be used. We plan to change the target to promote service opportunities with these agencies at least five times per academic year
Other goals relevant to your unit

This goal should be unique to your unit and the work you do | | | | | | |

that this core mission component must be measurable to be meaningful; hence the idea of unit engagement plans became an accepted framework for assessing implementation and improvement of engagement efforts across the institution within a standardized, centrally organized process. The university president and provost supported the development of community engagement plans by all units. They paved the way for the engagement plan to be introduced to all deans and vice presidents, who were less inclined to reject it when there was support from the highest level of the institution. This is in line with the argument presented by Furco and Holland (2009) and the Kellogg Commission (1999) described earlier, highlighting the importance of support from central administration to achieve meaningful transformation.

The Template Is Not Applicable to All Units

Early in the development of the plan template, it was recognized that some units may need different goals in some key areas. In the earliest iteration, the plan template was standardized in alignment with areas of community engagement prioritized in the university's strategic plan and the newer 21st Century University initiative. Along the way it was realized that some areas of institutional prioritization were understandably not applicable across every unit. In these cases, it was necessary to be flexible in the inclusion of the standardized goals in the template, or in the adaptation of goals to better reflect the mission and strategies of units with goals different from those in the original plan's template.

Academic and Administrative Units Must Have Different Templates

Differences between academic and administrative units necessitated the creation of different plan templates with slightly different goals. Because most administrative units do not have a research or teaching role, these units' engagement plans do not need to include a goal related to the university priority of supporting and increasing engaged scholarship efforts. A key difference between academic and administrative unit plan templates was that rather than having a goal to promote engagement at every level of possible geographic operation (local, state, national, and international) as in the academic unit plans, administrative

unit plans included a goal related to administrative unit staff developing a climate that supports community service and partnership activities. Work with external partners is not a typical part of the brief of many administrative unit staffers, but the framing of this goal by its nature encourages these units to develop measurable strategies that work best for them for engaging the community.

Educate Those Who Are Writing the Plan

A major factor in attaining initial acceptance for the template was outreach to deans and administrative leaders. Meetings with deans and vice presidents were scheduled in order to explain the importance of unit-level planning and measurement for their engagement efforts. These meetings were about the idea of the plans, but importantly, discussions were initiated to examine the mission-critical operations of units as related to community engagement, with an eye toward targeting efforts for efficacious outcomes for faculty, students, and community partners, and creating a pathway for measurement of those outcomes. After the initial meeting or meetings with unit leadership, it was necessary in some cases to continue meeting with staff responsible for developing and reporting on the progress of implementation of the plan. It was important for the Office of Community Engagement to provide ongoing technical assistance to help units report on their plans and use their plans to drive continuous improvement.

Entire Units Should Have Input in Developing the Plan

In improving the ability of the plans to result in measurable improvement, it is key to involve the full range of faculty, staff, and student leaders from the individual units. The process and plans are less than 3 years old from initial introduction of the concept to the implementation and reporting on the first round of the finalized planning template. In that span we have worked with leadership at the unit level and their key engagement staff and faculty leads. Going forward, the hope is to refine the process so all stakeholders from within a unit can contribute to the plan, creating buy-in from all parties in the ongoing development of a strong agenda for community engagement by their unit and a shared unit-level vision for what is acceptable in terms of continu-

ous improvement. Engaging everyone from the unit in developing the engagement plan helps to integrate it into the culture and fabric of the unit.

Be Prepared to Offer Assistance Throughout the Writing of the Plan

Ongoing assistance from a central office that understands community engagement is critical in establishing and maintaining an effort to plan for these activities at the unit level across the university. There must be a commitment to sustain the process, to work with unit leadership and the engagement-related staff on their terms, and to respect and understand their issues as they begin to develop these plans and as they take ownership of these plans over time. There were misunderstandings, differences in interpretation, questions, and requests for clarity, among other issues that required the assistance of the Office of Community Engagement. It is very important for units to understand that there is a central institutional resource to help and offer advice on these plans, which are not one-off, but meant to live and breathe over time. This level of support is necessary for ongoing sustainability of the plans. Having the Office of Community Engagement as the centralized office shepherding this university-wide initiative is key in institutionalization (Beere et al., 2011; Furco, 2010; Kecskes, 2008b).

Be Prepared to Review Drafts and Provide Opportunities to Resubmit

In some cases, even though units clearly have a community mission involving activities with external partners, they may not yet have strategically articulated language and thinking that relate an institutional mission of community engagement to their curricular engagement programs, their faculty-engaged scholarship, or opportunities for community service for their staff. In the beginning of the planning process this can lead to uncertainty in the plan language and in what exactly units might describe as sensible targets and measurements toward institutional engagement goals. An openness to reviewing drafts allows units to make better plans that can lead to continuous improvement. In addition, exercising flexibility in requiring that units adhere to established deadlines can support the creation of stronger and more meaningful plans that help units improve their partnership and outreach activities with external partners.

Units That Are Large, Diverse, and Fragmented Are Problematic

Some units have a singular operational direction and can easily connect their core activities in the community with the goals of the plan. However, some academic and administrative units have many underlying departments, centers, and institutes, so that their collective efforts cannot be easily categorized within a standardized template at the unit level. In the early years of establishing and normalizing the process, we must make accommodations in adapting the unit-level plan template for these complex units. As the process becomes more understood and accepted, subunit or departmental plans could be established, using an intentional design for working through the within-unit complexities to develop targets that can be rolled up in a meaningful way to the unit level.

Conclusion

Engagement plans, if properly developed and introduced across the institution, can help institutionalize community engagement through their university-wide implementation within both academic and administrative units. These plans guide community engagement efforts within the institution, addressing core principles as outlined in an institution's strategic plan and mission, further enhancing the institutionalization of community engagement. In addition to serving as the vehicle to institutionalize community engagement, engagement plans can be used to address critical areas that are deemed lacking or deficient within the institution or areas of priority. These critical areas are often identified during an institution's self-study for the Carnegie classification in community engagement, where areas of weaknesses or deficiencies surface. The engagement plan, then, can act as a tool to develop goals and strategies to address these areas of identified weaknesses and deficiencies. These applications of engagement plans are valid for any institution regardless of size or type.

Engagement plans can also incorporate targets to enable assessment of engagement across the institution, as well as to determine courses of action for improvement, if necessary. This function represents

another value of engagement plans, as colleges and universities are being required to assess the success of their community engagement efforts. The engagement plans can be uniquely tailored for each institution, with goals that address areas of priority and relevance as they strive to institutionalize community engagement.

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