

**Community Partnerships and Extension Connections Committee  
December 11, 2002**

**Committee Members:**

Barbara Muesing – Director, College of Continuing Education  
Diana Martenson – Organization & Program Development Specialist, UM Extension,  
Dale Blyth – Assistant Director, The Center for 4-H Youth Development,  
Ron James – Director, Center for Business Ethics, University of St. Thomas  
Laurel Hirt – Coordinator, Community Involvement and Service Learning, Career and  
Community Learning Center,  
Mary Vogel – Director, Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships & Program  
Director, College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture

**Committee Charge:**

- Identify the external groups, organizations, and institutions to which the university should be connected as partners in mutually beneficial relationships
- Recommend a process for establishing, assessing, and terminating community partnerships
- Relationship of Extension to core University units and activities

**Committee Work:**

**PROPOSAL: Community-University Partnership Typology**

**Need/Opportunity**

Contemporary challenges require institutions to imagine new strategies. Challenges facing Minnesota require the University of Minnesota to imagine new ways of engaging with the community to craft and achieve a 21<sup>st</sup> century shared public purpose. Community-University partnerships are increasingly recognized as a key strategy to create the infrastructure needed to support the University public engagement agenda.

*Getting things done* was a popular 2002 campaign slogan that appealed to voters across the State. Community-University partnerships are a mechanism to *get things done*.

The University has, to its credit, a wide array of partnership activities. Many are thriving, some have no doubt outlived their usefulness, and others may have failed to achieve the intended outcome. One reason partnerships fail may relate to a lack of understanding of the different types of partnerships that exist, and the different types that are possible. Partners may base their expectations on what they perceive to be the essential components of a partnership agreement, and those perceptions may be different depending on the perspective and experience of the partners.

The Community Partnership Committee of the Council on Public Engagement has identified a project that will strengthen the University's capacity to create and implement community partnerships.

## **Description**

The Community Partnership Committee proposes to design and develop a Community Partnership Typology to help both the community and the University understand the range and types of partnerships that exist and are possible. The typology will take into consideration the perspective of both community and University interests. The conceptual framework will include mechanisms for articulating a common vision, identifying strategies, setting up a governance structure, organizing tasks, evaluating outcomes, and sharing resources. Ideally, the typology will be “bilingual” in that it will use language that is understood by both the community and the University. A thorough study of existing partnerships (in Minnesota and external) will be the basis for classifying partnerships into easily understood categories. Existing partnerships will be used as examples.

The Community Partnership Typology will be established as a user friendly Web site to build understanding of the types of public engagement partnerships that exist, showcase models, and provide access to resources needed to create new partnerships. The Web site might include a set of questions to help steer the user toward the most appropriate partnership type. Links to the Web sites of existing partnerships will help users design partnerships, and at the same time increase visibility for current public engagement activity. Examples of policies, governance agreements, work plans, evaluation tools, and sunset strategies will be included. An archive of past partnerships, their achievements, and lessons learned will provide a historical record of partnership work that has been completed.

The Web site will have immediate utility to any user considering a Community-University partnership. Additionally, the Web site could be marketed to entrepreneurs, community leaders, public policy makers, alumni, and alumni as a resource, or portal, for connecting to the intellectual assets of the University.

As the Web site evolves, it could serve as a system for capturing critical information about Community-University partnerships, thereby bringing to life the typology as a database. For example, a consistent tool for gathering evaluation information could allow for aggregating the data. Similarly a consistent tool for summarizing lessons learned could, over time, yield a set of best practices for Community-University partnerships.

## **Time frame**

- The 6-month goal will be to design the Typology.
- The 2-year goal will be to create a system at the University that captures, classifies, and encourages community partnerships in ways that make it easier for both the community and the University to engage in mutually beneficial ways.
- The 3-year goal will be to create in Minnesota a way of describing, facilitating, capturing, and assessing the public engagement of the University, and other higher education institutions of the State.

### **Possible Linkages to other Council on Public Engagement Committees**

The Community Partnership Typology project has relevance to many, if not all, of the Council on Public Engagement committees. One classification of partnerships might relate to student engagement. Another might focus on diversity initiatives. The typology could be used to evaluate and reward a collegiate unit's public engagement activity, plus a way to measure the University's commitment to public engagement – relevant to the incentives and outcomes/assessment committees. And, the Typology Web site has potential as a public communication tool.

### **Proposal: Strengthening the University Community Connection**

#### **Need/Opportunity**

Through the years, land grant institutions have been understood at their best, to be the “creation and possession of the people.” Their purpose has been tied to the “practical” concerns of both vocation and citizenship. People have sought to make these institutions places to develop a kind of education that engages a broad diversity of people in the struggle to make a better life, not just for themselves, but for the larger “commonwealth” of their communities, states, and nation.<sup>1</sup>

Opportunities for University/community partnerships often go untapped because of a lack of connection. For example, teaching faculty may find it difficult to place students in relevant community internships, and research faculty may struggle with the challenge of disseminating new knowledge to those who could benefit. At the same time, field faculty of the University of Minnesota Extension Service have the responsibility to identify community needs, and sometimes those needs exceed the content expertise that Extension can provide.

There are several ways to think about the work of Extension. 1) The Extension “network” across the state and how it might be useful for public engagement of a variety of types. 2) The Extension “model” connecting community needs with university resources, and how it might be used with other university colleges. During the mid-90's Extension Collegiate Program Leaders with joint appointments in collegiate units served as links between field and campus faculty, and many connections were made. For example, a county courthouse needed a landscape design that translated into a project for students in landscape architecture. The value of professional relationships became evident during that time with success often based on professional relationships that developed between field and campus faculty.

The Community Partnership Committee of the Council on Public Engagement has identified a project that will strengthen the connection for public engagement and the research agenda for colleges across the University. The project will focus on building strong relationships between collegiate public engagement liaisons and County Extension Directors as it develops an infrastructure for communication and engagement that can be used system wide.

The Community Partnership Typology proposal, also submitted by this committee, will enhance the success of this proposal. Having an established typology will improve communication between colleges; bringing greater clarity and understanding as faculty discuss needs, interests and possibilities through partnerships.

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<sup>1</sup> Scott J. Peters, Research Assistant, Center for Democracy and Citizenship Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, Cooperative Extension and the Democratic Promise of the Land-Grant Idea, 1996.

### **Description**

The Community Partnership Committee proposes to build relationships and create formal connections between collegiate liaisons for public engagement and County Extension Directors. Collegiate liaisons have interest in extending the knowledge and research of their academic units, and County Extension Directors are accountable for connecting the needs of the community with the resources of the University. Both of these positions are newly created with mutual interests; one located in colleges across the University and the other in counties across the state.

County Extension Directors are responsible for identifying critical issues in their counties, and developing and strengthening linkages with the University around those issues. They make referrals and promote existing Extension programs taught by regional educators. But, community issues often are complex, requiring expertise that goes beyond Extension's current portfolio of programs. A mechanism to connect these community issues with the broader intellectual assets of the University will increase Extension's capacity to connect to the community, and at the same time expand opportunities for collegiate units to engage with communities around their academic discipline.

The University of Minnesota Extension Service, in partnership with the Center for Rural Policy and the Blandin Foundation, is producing a 2003 Minnesota Atlas, which will document social and economic characteristics of counties across the state. March 2003, County Extension Directors will learn how to use the Atlas to engage county stakeholders in an assessment of each county, thereby identifying issues that County Extension Directors will refer to Extension and/or the broader University. The established connections with collegiate liaisons will strengthen Extension's capacity to connect university expertise (faculty and students) with community needs and expand the University's public engagement agenda.

If funded, this project will help establish the relationships and infrastructure for formal *outreach* and *inreach* public engagement opportunities. Extension will convene a dialogue with collegiate liaisons and County Extension Directors, which will inform the development of an interactive system to effectively and efficiently communicate needs and opportunities with each other. Once established this system can be used for the same purpose by faculty on coordinate campuses, research and outreach centers, and regional sustainable partnerships.

### **Time Frame**

- The 1-year goal will be to build relationships through dialogue and site visits and develop a system to communicate *inreach* and *outreach* opportunities.
- The 3-year goal will be to have a system in place to facilitate an interactive process between campus and field faculty. This system will document the University's increased capacity to meet community needs across the state.

### **Possible Linkages to the Council on Public Engagement Committees**

The University Community Connections Project will expand university community partnerships. In doing so, it will directly contribute to the work of the following committees: student engagement, public scholarship, cultural diversity, institutional incentives and community service awards.