

**University of Minnesota Board of Regents
Educational Planning and Policy Committee
June 12, 2003**

Update: Outreach and Civic Engagement

Policy Questions:

- How can the University better align its public engagement priorities with institutional strategic plans, the compact process, faculty and staff performance reviews, and accountability analysis and reporting systems?
- What evidence can be developed for the value of civic engagement and its contribution to the core University missions?
- As the University's budget becomes increasingly dependent on tuition, sponsored programs, and donor directed funds, what are appropriate financial models for supporting outreach and civic engagement?

This report summarizes the first-year activities and accomplishments of the Council on Public Engagement (COPE) and provides recommendations for future action. COPE's charge is to:

- serve as a catalyst for creative thinking about public engagement,
- recognize and encourage activities that strengthen the University's civic mission,
- provide a clearer assessment of public engagement as an indicator of institutional performance and public accountability for its teaching, research and outreach mission.

In addressing these responsibilities, the Council formed working committees to focus on five strategic initiatives: communication, recognition, partnership, programs, and assessment.

Communication: Develop a more robust internal and external communications strategy focused around themes of publicly engaged research and scholarship, teaching and learning, and community partnerships.

There is general agreement that the actual public value of the University's contributions through research and scholarship, teaching and learning, and community connections is not adequately understood and appreciated outside the University or even inside. This is not just a problem of the need for more publicity in a narrow sense. It raises the important issue of what obligation to communicate with broader publics is entailed in the conduct of public scholarship.

In general, the notion of public scholarship emphasizes the public dimensions of the University's research. This may mean optimizing the extent to which University research informs and is informed by the public good, maximizing the generation and transfer of knowledge and technology, educating the public about what research the University does, and listening to the public about what research needs to be done. These meanings of public scholarship have implications for the University's connections with external communities. They also imply that

the University should report and celebrate the many aspects of public scholarship already in place, including (but not limited to) the transfer of knowledge and technology that contributes to an improved quality of life for significant portions of the population.

Beyond this, research conducted as public scholarship assumes that the University has a positive obligation to inform the public about its work, so that the very process of academic scholarship – whether in and of itself "public" – contributes to the intellectual capital of the state. One element of an institutional culture of engagement is that this kind of "public pedagogy" is acknowledged and supported by faculty, administrators, and everyone else as a valued part of our collective professional work.

Actions

- Requested the dean of each college to designate a special liaison, starting in September 2003, to: 1) identify and report the public scholarship within each unit that can be featured in the University's external and internal communications, and 2) help establish educating the public about what we do as an institutional priority.
- Developed a portal-ready Web site to facilitate communication about engaged initiatives within the University and with external audiences.

Recommendations

- Inform University academic and administrative units about the on-line tools available to them to communicate their public engagement activities.
- Request units to develop messages that can be incorporated into E-news and the University's homepage.

Recognition: Develop an integrated strategy for embedding recognition of publicly engaged work more deeply within institutional processes for incentives, rewards, and awards.

The long-term goal of an integrated strategy to incorporate public engagement more directly in processes relating to incentives and rewards is to strengthen an institutional culture of engagement. This has far-reaching effects within the University. Strengthening a culture of engagement affects how people in the University, including students, faculty, staff, and administrators, view their own work. It affects how people view the purposes and responsibilities of the University as an academic institution. It affects the kinds of work that are valued and encouraged as an institutional priority. It affects the kinds of work people choose to do. It requires concerted efforts at multiple levels of the University's structure, including departments, colleges, governance committees, and central administration. It requires active support from faculty and students. It requires continuing leadership from senior administrators with support from the Board of Regents. And it involves cooperative efforts with disciplinary and professional associations and with funding agencies that help shape academic cultures and incentives.

Actions

- Gathered and reviewed examples of how the University currently recognizes academic and administrative units, faculty, staff, and students for public engagement activities.

- Co-sponsored a day-long Festival of Public Work in the Humphrey Institute, featuring student presentations, a roundtable discussion of varied engaged projects, and a forum on public scholarship.
- Organized a public forum on public scholarship featuring a talk by Julie Ellison, national director of Imagining America.
- Sponsored two forums on civic dimensions of disciplines organized by the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (GAPSA).

Recommendations

- Incorporate public engagement into annual performance reviews, emphasizing engagement as it integrates across research, teaching, and service. Report publicly engaged work to raise awareness of supervisors and employees.
- Incorporate public engagement goals into the annual compact process in order to formalize public engagement as an institutional priority.
- Identify a few units, which, with support from their deans, are willing to explore the practical possibilities and consequences of working as "engaged departments."
- Recognize by transcript notation as Community Service Scholars those students with significant involvement in community service or service learning.
- Create an annual Engaged University Day to highlight engaged activities and recipients of public engagement awards specific to each college.
- Stimulate wide discussion and debate about the meanings of faculty engagement through forums and special events, publications, and groups willing to undertake sustained work on this topic.

Partnership: Identify and promote conditions for successful, interactive, mutually beneficial partnerships as the main basis for the University's connections to external groups, organizations, and communities.

The number and variety of current University-community connections are remarkable. Yet the University is faulted for alleged inaccessibility and unresponsiveness to community concerns. In part, there is a problem of public perception and understanding of the ways in which different kinds of work throughout the University contribute positively to the well-being of people locally, in the state and nation, and globally. In part, there is apprehension and uncertainty about approaching an institution that appears formidable and intimidating. In part, connecting to communities is regarded as a separate responsibility of particular units, not an expectation of appropriate forms of connection throughout the University. And, in part, not all community connections are equally effective and successful.

The future of University-community connections lies in the further expansion of successful community partnerships: interactive, mutually beneficial relationships in which the University is involved not as service-provider but as a responsive partner. Involvement in community partnerships is implied by the meanings of public scholarship, discussed above. The notion of public scholarship suggests that significant portions of the University's scholarship will be conducted within the context of ongoing interactions with individuals, organizations, and communities beyond the University campus. It suggests also that University faculty, staff, and students will work, whenever possible, to define and implement research and scholarship that

respects and reflects the interests and needs of the broader community. But successful community partnerships don't just happen. They require appropriate attitudes, opportunities, and skills, including a supportive infrastructure.

Actions

- Funded the development of a community-university partnership typology that will help in the creation of future partnership arrangements.
- Funded a program to strengthen university-community partnerships by placing students in community projects to assist Extension faculty as advisers and providers of on-site coordination and support.
- Formed a special Committee on Engagement to strengthen public engagement among CIC member institutions.
- Endorsed the Minnesota proposal for an Engaged University Initiative for possible funding by Kellogg and other foundations.

Recommendations

- Use existing and emerging e-technologies to communicate more effectively with key constituents about targeted issues.
- Explore the introduction and adaptation to other colleges of EPICS (Engineering Projects in Community Service), a model from Purdue University.
- Explore the applicability of the Kellogg Foundation's seven-part test for university engagement and NASULGC's Academy of Engagement model, involving engagement leadership through Extension.
- Work through existing community partnerships that focus on cultural diversity in research, teaching, and service to develop proposals for enhancing cultural diversity as a component of the University's commitment to public engagement.
- Explore the development of an information resource for diverse communities from the ranks of retired University faculty and staff.
- Create a stronger infrastructure for engaged work conducted through community partnerships.
- Pursue further the Minnesota proposal for a CIC Engaged University Initiative in conjunction with the special CIC Committee on Engagement. Explore funding opportunities.

Programs: Continue and expand programs that are proving effective in involving students, faculty, alumni, and others in engaged activities.

The long-term goals of strengthening the culture of engagement and strengthening connections to the community require innovative approaches and novel practices, but they are also being served by special programs that are under way here and elsewhere. To identify, continue, and when possible expand these programs is an important effort that cuts across and supports the other strategic initiatives described in this report. Many special programs that support public engagement are well-established, others have been introduced recently, and still others are being actively planned.

Actions

- Administered the Executive Vice President and Provost's Office Outstanding Community Service Award. Out of 28 nominees, six were recommended for awards. This program is now recognized as an important University distinction
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- Funded a bi-monthly e-newsletter, now subscribed to around the country and the world, on public engagement initiatives here and elsewhere, with special emphasis on public scholarship and civic learning in different fields.
- Published a brochure for wide distribution describing 34 projects COPE and the previous Civic Engagement Task Force have funded during the past three years.
- Endorsed the public engagement awards and programs organized by graduate and professional students, including the Mary McEvoy Award for Public Engagement and the Impress the President program with President Bruininks and collegiate deans; and the Alumni Association's Great Conversations on the Road.

Recommendations

- Engage multicultural nonprofit organizations to plan celebrations that mark national and local milestones in improving civic life. Such a celebration is being organized to recognize the 50th anniversary, in 2004, of Brown v. Board of Education, ending segregation of public schools.

Assessment: Develop more comprehensive measures for assessing the impact and outcomes of publicly engaged activities.

A key factor for the success of all our efforts is the development of comprehensive measures for capturing and communicating the positive impact and outcomes that result from the University's work. Many familiar measures of institutional performance consist of information about basic inputs and outputs: enrollments and graduation rates; size of research awards and number of patents granted; contracts with outside organizations and projects completed.

These are vital measures of institutional activity, but they do not fully convey the significant consequences of the University's work in terms of its impact on people's lives individually and collectively. A more complete assessment of the University's public contributions requires more comprehensive measures that refer to their impact on the quality of life.

Interest in the development of more comprehensive measures of institutional performance is growing nation-wide. For example, the new accreditation criteria of the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association includes a separate category – Engagement and Service – that states, "As called for by its mission, the organization identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value." The core components under this criterion include such characteristics as the institution's capacity to learn, responsiveness to constituencies, and effective connections to communities.

Assessment of these characteristics requires complex attitudinal data and non-obvious indirect measures. Similarly, the Minnesota Campus Compact Civic Engagement Study specifies such indicators as a campus culture that nurtures civic engagement, support for civic leadership, and

visibility of civic engagement programs. Again, assessment of these conditions requires comprehensive measures that are by no means self-evident.

Through its work this year, COPE addressed some of the issues in constructing more comprehensive measures of institutional performance. A number of points seem especially pertinent. First, assessment should be guided by a shared recognition of what an engaged University of Minnesota looks like over time. Second, assessment, no less than incentives and rewards, should acknowledge that not everyone will be engaged equally or in the same way, but everyone will be cognizant of the ways in which their research and teaching serve public purposes.

Useful distinctions are provided by Bill Doherty's three categories of faculty engagement: (a) at minimum an ability to articulate the public value of their professional work; (b) more actively bringing expertise to people in ways they see as relevant (the traditional model of service provider); (c) engaged in collaborative working relationships with community partners to define problems and solve them through cooperative effort. Assessment should not presume or expect that everyone will participate in the University's public contributions in the same way. Measures of institutional performance should reflect the diversity of professional work that comprises an engaged university.

Third, an intriguing challenge for assessment is to measure the University's practical return on its engaged activities. Public engagement is more often regarded as a cost to the University than as a source of benefit, which may reflect the side of the ledger that is easier to measure. But we should be asking not only what engagement costs but what we receive in return.

Comprehensive assessment and evaluation of the University's institutional performance, including its engaged activities, is vital for a number of purposes: to identify our strengths and weaknesses as an engaged institution; to communicate effectively about our public contributions; and to provide a sound basis for public accountability. There is still a great deal of work to be done in developing the kinds of measures that will adequately serve these purposes. COPE proposes to continue working on these issues in conjunction with appropriate administrators and other committees.

Actions

- Reviewed a broad range of public engagement accountability measures of other higher education institutions, professional associations, and other organizations.

Recommendations

- Identify measures of the University's practical return on engaged activities.
- Identify and prioritize the University's strengths and weaknesses as an engaged institution.

Policy Questions:

- How can the University better align its public engagement priorities with institutional strategic plans, the compact process, faculty and staff performance reviews, and accountability analysis and reporting systems?

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