OFFICE FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

ACCOUNTING AND ASSESSMENT TASK FORCE

CHARGE: To explore the development and implementation of protocols and procedures that can systematically account for the number of public engagement project activities, levels of participation, and overall impacts of activities on students, faculty, staff, the community, and the institution.

RATIONALE: Each year, the University receives many requests for information about the number of students and faculty involved in the community, the number of public engagement projects taking place in certain communities or on particular issues, and data on the impact that our public engagement initiatives are having on students, the faculty, and the community. While there are several efforts underway in several units to account for public engagement involvement and impact, these efforts are not coordinated with each other and are not applied on a University-wide basis. A systematic approach to accounting and assessment of public engagement can help ensure that we strategically apply our limited resources in ways that can maximize engagement opportunities for all participants.

CO-CHAIRS: **Dick Senese**, Associate Dean for Community Vitality, Extension
Laurel Hirt, Service-Learning Director, Career and Community Learning Center

RECOMMENDED TASKS AND QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE:

1) Review existing public engagement databases and accounting systems. Determine the strengths and weaknesses of each. Might one or more of these systems be expanded and be applied to more units at the University?

2) Explore databases and accounting systems being used at other Universities. Determine the strengths and weaknesses of those systems. Might one or more of those systems be adopted by the University of Minnesota?

3) Review the Database Task Force Report and determine what kinds of interface, if any, with other University databases, might be appropriate.

4) Determine the extent to which public engagement projects, activities, and programs are being evaluated for impact on students, faculty, community, units, departments, communities, and/or institutions, as appropriate. What mechanisms can be put in place to coordinate impact data across programs? Is there a set of universal questions that

programs might adopt and include in their evaluations, which might provide data that can be aggregated across programs?

5) Identify a set of priorities regarding measuring impacts. Do we want to focus on particular themes (e.g., impact we are having on poverty) or on particular constituents (e.g., impact on students' learning)? Do we need a repository of valid and reliable instruments that public engagement leaders can access and use?

6) Explore some ways to report the data we do collect in ways that would be helpful and useful to all involved.

7) Explore ways to collect data horizontally (across programs) and vertically (across years).

8) Detail components of the specific investment the University might need to make to secure viable University-wide accounting and assessment systems. What might the costs be to develop and implement the systems? Given limited resources, where should resources be applied that will produce maximum results?

REFERENCES:

Community TechKnowledge (CTK) www.communitytech.net (provides a suite of web-based software applications, reporting tools, and consultancy support to the human services sector; helps nonprofits to efficiently track program outcomes and the impact of human services and funding on communities.)

Senate Joint Subcommittee on Databases. (2008, Feb). *Final report: Senate joint subcommittee on databases.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.