

Characteristics of “Engaged Institutions” and Sustainable Partnerships, and Effective Strategies for Change

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DEFINING THE ENGAGED INSTITUTION

The engaged institution is committed to direct interaction with external constituencies and communities through the mutually-beneficial exchange, exploration, and application of knowledge, expertise and information. These interactions enrich and expand the learning and discovery functions of the academic institution while also enhancing community capacity. The work of the engaged campus is responsive to community-identified needs, opportunities, and goals in ways that are appropriate to the campus’ mission and academic strengths. The interaction also builds greater public understanding of the role of the campus as a knowledge asset and resource.

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ENGAGED CAMPUSⁱ

- Articulates civic engagement in the campus mission and strategic plans, linking public issues to academic strengths and goals
- Involves communities in continuous, purposeful, and authentic ways, with a deliberate approach to partnerships
- Demonstrates a core commitment to learning through engagement endeavors
- Links engagement to every dimension of campus life and decisions
- Develops and sustains necessary policies and infrastructure
- Demonstrates leadership for engagement at all organizational levels
- Supports interdisciplinary work
- Makes engagement visible internally and externally
- Assesses engagement within the distinctive contexts of faculty, students, and community

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIPSⁱⁱ

- Joint exploration of separate and common goals and interests
- Creation of a mutually rewarding shared agenda
- Articulation of clear expectations, capacities, and consequences for each partner
- Success measured in both institutional and community terms
- Shared control of partnership directions, and/or resources
- Focus on strengths and assets of each partner
- Identification of opportunities for early success and regular celebration
- Focus on shared (two-way) learning and capacity building
- Attention to communications and open cultivation of trust
- Commitment to continuous assessment of the partnership itself, as well as outcomes

STRATEGIES THAT WORK

LESSONS ON PARTNERSHIP SUSTAINABILITY

- Invest the time to build the understanding that is the foundation of partnerships
- Jointly explore urgent and unmet needs or opportunities – using reliable and accurate sources
- Create formal partnership governance structures (community-campus advisory groups)
 - Involve broad and balanced representation of community interests: race, gender, income, etc.
 - Articulate substantive and specific governance roles for the campus and each partner
 - Involve partners in proposal development, project implementation, ongoing evaluation
 - Meet regularly and often
- Articulate goals regarding enhancement of both campus and community capacity
- Involve/employ neighborhood citizens in needs analysis, project design, implementation and evaluation
- Scale of project activities reflect reality of available resources
- Collaborate in leveraging new sources of funding
- Identify specific, tangible, measurable impact goals
- Create a specific project timeline with short and long-term goals
- Create proactive strategies for communications on and off campus

LESSONS ON INSTITUTIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

- Involvement of campus leadership in planning and project implementation/evaluation
- Investment of campus resources throughout the project and into the future as needed
- Commitment to evaluate and appropriately recognize/reward faculty
- Permanent investment in necessary academic and professional talent to fulfill engagement objectives
- Integration of partnership activities into the curriculum and direct learning experience of students, especially service learning courses
- Linkage across engagement projects and activities - creating a coherent campus climate for engagement
- Direct connection of partnerships to the teaching and research mission of the campus
- Involvement of multiple disciplines and faculty; collaboration with other institutions as appropriate
- Pursuit and acquisition of grants and gifts from other sources to sustain engagement projects and/or to fund other partnership activities

TOOLS FOR INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE RELATED TO ENGAGEMENT

- Mission clarification/consensus
- Faculty development
- Curriculum reform
- Infrastructure/support
- Community involvement
- Incentives, rewards, recognition
- Pathways to excellence for individuals, departments, the institution
- Orientation, recruitment/hiring guidelines
- Institutional research - data documenting impacts on faculty, students, and community
- Grants/gifts
- Peer interactions, conferences, site visits

ⁱ Synthesis of factors suggested by Bringle & Hatcher, 1999; Holland, 1996, 1997, 1999; Gelmon, Holland & Shinnamon, 1998; Holland & Ramaley, 1998; and Zlotkowski, 1998.

ⁱⁱ Holland, 1997, 2000; Holland & Gelmon, 1998; Holland & Ramaley, 1998