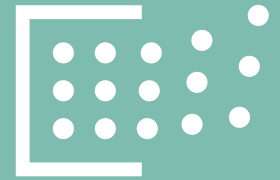


# CHAPTER

# 1

## BUILDING AN ENGAGED CAMPUS



**U**NIVERSITIES are home to scholars, facilities, and usable expertise from across every conceivable field, all assembled under one banner [1]. And yet, this unparalleled set of resources is rarely—let alone effectively—leveraged to address critical social and environmental challenges. Business-as-usual approaches to academic research and teaching disincentivize engagement with and limit the utility of institutions of higher education for solving our communities’ grand challenges.

Community engagement “describes collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity” [2, 3]. Accordingly, most universities’ stated purpose includes serving the public good through education. A reorientation toward a framework in which the university and community co-produce solutions to societal issues is required to reap the benefits of true, reciprocal engagement [4]. Extension programs and investments in science communication are critical, yet on an engaged campus, outward-facing engagement is promoted at every level, from student curriculum to staff support, faculty research, and administrative leadership [4–6].

An intentional, campus-wide commitment to engagement will help maximize the impact and relevance of the research university and provide structural paths to the formal recognition of engagement as a primary function of the campus community.



How can universities institutionalize a commitment to engagement and monitor and report their impact?

### DEFINING TERMS & ESTABLISHING PURPOSE

Terms like “community engagement” and “engaged scholarship” have a range of definitions across disciplines, departments, and individuals within a single university [7] (see glossary for term definitions). While working definitions are flexible and can be changed as input is gathered from diverse voices across campus, setting a campus-specific definition of engagement will increase transparency, accountability, and allow for assessment over time [8–10].

A campus-specific commitment to engagement should be linked to institutional mission(s) and strategic goals. For example, Columbia University President Lee Bollinger has described engagement as the “fourth purpose” of the research university [11], defining engagement as “merging scholarly knowledge... with groups and institutions beyond the academy... [an effort that] interacts positively with the three more traditionally articulated purposes of universities – research, education, and service.” Being intentional about the motivations and end goals of engagement will help identify the timeline, methods, and stakeholders to include in establishing a campus-wide engagement strategy, prioritizing resources, and determining evaluation timelines and approaches [8, 9]. An

institutional strategy for engagement should also identify the key audiences for engagement beyond the university and discuss how new commitments may align or conflict with other key institutional goals.

## **ACTION PLANNING: THE LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT**

Universities vary widely in the degree to which they institutionalize and incentivize engaged research and learning. Barbara Holland’s Levels of Commitment to Community Engagement Matrix provides the following self-evaluation framework [12].

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### **Public engagement is considered least to most institutionalized on four levels:**

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#### **Level 1**

“We would provide service to the community, if we had additional time and resources, but it is not specifically encouraged or rewarded.”

#### **Level 2**

“We encourage faculty, students, and staff to volunteer in their local communities because to do so is good for society and is consistent with the actions of an educated person.”

#### **Level 3**

“We see the community as a laboratory for research and teaching purposes. We have expertise that can help solve community issues, and we can help study community problems. Our students spend time in community based learning experiences and, in some cases, required service projects.”

#### **Level 4**

“We ask the community to be our partner in setting and conducting our scholarly service agenda. We invest in service learning within the curricular experience of students, and have support and reward structures for faculty and students who engage in community-university partnerships.”

Institutionalization of engagement can occur across multiple dimensions of decision-making within universities, including:

- ▶ hiring/promotion/tenure,
- ▶ organizational structure,
- ▶ faculty and staff involvement,
- ▶ student involvement,
- ▶ mission and vision,
- ▶ community involvement, and
- ▶ outreach.

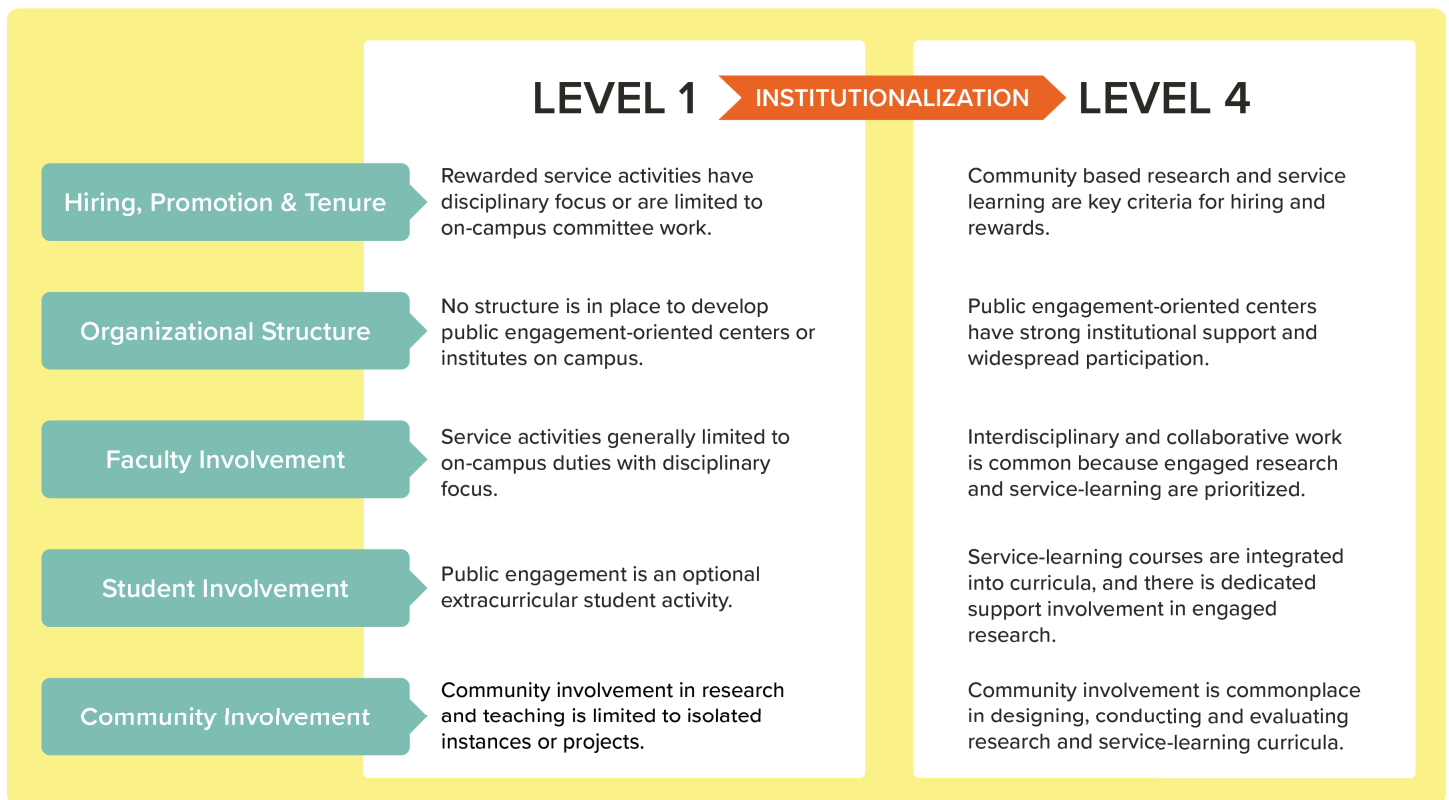
That the institutionalization of engagement requires reforms across multiple university systems highlights the need to establish campus-wide buy-in and muster support from

top administration, faculty, research staff, and students. Specific investments in support for engaged research as well as cultural reforms (including the valorization of engaged scholarship) aid in creating an environment that allows engaged scholars to thrive and invites interaction with societal actors and surrounding communities.

Below we adapt Holland’s approach to illustrate how dimensions of decision-making map onto the levels of engagement.

## CAMPUS OFFICES DEVOTED TO PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Many universities have dedicated offices for public engagement (OPEs). These serve to amplify, implement, or legitimize community-



engaged work across the university, and they can function as a “front door” for community partners to make initial contact with the university [13]. OPEs that promote the work of students, faculty, and staff simultaneously promote community connection. For example, an OPE may offer an annual award recognizing outstanding scholarly engagement, rewarding individual efforts while also demonstrating the institution’s commitment to such engagement. Campus engagement offices can also employ skilled conveners who can identify opportunities for faculty engagement, navigate opportunities for research without pushing a single department or disciplinary agenda, and build trust with potential external partners [14]. The most effective engagement offices guide institutional outreach by working to address societal issues, strengthen civic responsibility and democratic values, and enhance scholarship, research, creative activity, curriculum, and teaching and learning.

Engagement services not only encourage, but help researchers overcome barriers to co-produced research. For example, Michigan State University’s Office for Public Engagement and Scholarship (OPES) provides training in effective engagement for faculty, staff, and students and supports engaged researchers through activities including dedicated writing retreats that encourage the communication and publication of community-engaged scholarship (engage.msu.edu).

## RESOURCE ENGAGEMENT VIA DEDICATED FUNDING

Reforming funding structures is one of the most direct ways to change research culture [15]. Engaged researchers must secure support through grants that reward relationship building

and other aspects of community engagement. Thus universities may further engaged scholarship by, for instance, earmarking funds for diversion to community partners to alleviate the costs associated with partnering with the university, compensating outside partners for their time, transportation, and food costs for meetings, which are often unallowable expenses under traditional grants. The Academic Venture Fund (AVF) at the Cornell Atkinson Center for Sustainability is one such dedicated resource, and it provides supplemental funding for researchers to build relationships with community partners.

***“While most universities invest energy in the launch and initial collaborative efforts to form teams around grand challenges, far fewer have invested in continued leadership engagement, central funding and long-term staff support.”***

***-Weiss and Khademian,***

***Inside Higher Ed***

Many universities have invested in Grand Challenge initiatives, which invest large sums of money in externally-engaged transdisciplinary research efforts [1, 14]. Writing in *Inside Higher Ed*, Weiss and Khademian note that “while most

universities invest energy in the launch and initial collaborative efforts to form teams around grand challenges, far fewer have invested in continued leadership engagement, central funding and long-term staff support.”

In other words, enduring change is not built by establishing a Grand Challenge, but by establishing and nurturing it over time, making long-term investments in engagement capacity that can sustain partnerships, support innovative and risk-taking projects, and facilitate transdisciplinary research that falls outside traditional funding mechanisms.

## INTERNAL EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

Monitoring engagement activities on campus can yield a wealth of both quantitative and qualitative information. Among the many approaches for monitoring and assessing engagement activities on campuses [8, 12, 16–18], we highlight three resources for the evaluation and assessment of campus-wide engagement efforts.

We recommend universities start with one of the following self-assessment tools, then tailor the instrument to their specific needs. The “Building Capacity for Community Engagement: Institutional Self-Assessment” [19] and the “Assessment Rubric for Institutionalizing Community Engagement in Higher Education” [20] are comprehensive rubrics for scoring progress toward institutionalizing engagement at the department, college, school, or university level. The TEFCE (Towards a European Framework for Community Engagement in Higher Education) Toolbox applies a research framework to the university’s own operations from team-building and data collection through report generation and impact assessment [18].

The process of assessing the success of community engagement should reflect the input of diverse institutional constituencies, including administrators, faculty, research staff, students, and community partners. Focus on concrete and near-term goals, and repeat the evaluation process as often as needed to identify successes and failures and set goals for the coming period [at a minimum, an annual review is necessary; 21]. Consider integrating data and perspectives from outside groups. Though often absent in university self-assessments [22], community partners’ stories can provide the most compelling evidence for the impact of university engagement [8].

When undertaking such an assessment, harness the wealth of expertise and institutional knowledge on campus. Consult with the university’s office of research on data collection techniques and include expert evaluators on the assessment team [8]. While bottom-up support for an initiative like this is invaluable, it is also helpful for OPEs to ally with champions of engaged scholarship within high-level administrative positions.

## EXTERNAL ASSESSMENTS AND AWARDS

The following are existing opportunities that reward the engaged work of universities and individual stakeholders. They provide recognition as well as goal-setting incentives to help others pursue a more engaged campus.

1. The Carnegie Community Engagement Classification (CCEC) is the gold standard for accreditation of engaged universities in the U.S., and it has been instrumental in a culture shift toward community engagement recognition since 2005 [2]. Applicants provide a detailed narrative of engagement

activities across their university, periodically reapplying to maintain the institution's CCEC status. Workshops and other resources are available for guidance. Pilot programs to apply the classification in other countries have been undertaken in Australia, Canada, and Ireland [23].

2. Campus Compact, a coalition of colleges and universities in the United States, offers engaged campus awards to institutions and individuals, a credentialing program for individuals (Community Engagement Professional Credentialing Program), and the Ernest A. Lynton Award for early career engaged faculty [6].
3. The U.K.-based National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement awards the Engage Watermark that recognizes higher education institutions' efforts to support public engagement [24]. It also offers a streamlined self-assessment tool, mentoring and consulting, and resources for strategic planning for universities aiming to become more engaged.
4. Engagement Australia offers Excellence in Community Engagement Awards for exemplary engagement activities to both students and leadership [25].

5. The Talloires Network for Engaged Universities [26] is a global coalition that offers awards for civic engagement at member universities, including the University Award for Innovative Civic Engagement and the McJannet Prize for student community engagement initiatives. It also boasts several cohort programs to develop leaders in civic engagement.
6. The International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement [27] offers awards and recognitions, publishes a journal, and hosts an annual conference.
7. The Engagement Scholarship Consortium [28] is a global network that offers grants, awards, an annual Emerging Engagement Scholars workshop, and an Outreach and Engagement Practitioners Network. The Consortium sponsors two journals and hosts an annual conference.

## SPOTLIGHT

### UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA'S ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNITY-ENGAGED RESEARCH [22]

In 2016, the University of Victoria completed a systematic, comprehensive assessment of engaged research activities across the entire campus. Following the recommendations of University of Brighton scholar Angie Hart [29], among others, the assessment addressed multiple levels of engagement (individual, community, and systemwide) and leveraged both quantitative and qualitative data. Sources included publications, events, workshops, and policy meetings; a review of reports and prior assessments; in-depth case studies of engaged research projects; interviews with key administrators; and the consultation and comment of community partners.

#### **Outcomes:**

The impact report provided the University of Victoria with:

- ▶ An inventory of outputs and outcomes of the University's engagement oriented units in a bounded period of time (2009 - 2015);
- ▶ Documented case studies of exemplary engaged research projects;
- ▶ An impact rubric to assess engaged scholarship activities;
- ▶ And guidelines for reviewers assessing engaged scholarship in grant proposals, tenure and promotion, etc.

#### **Key finding:**

The assessment indicated high levels of impact among the community organizations involved in the University's engagement efforts and excellent alignment with its mission to be a "good neighbor" in the local community (over 70% of documented impacts occurred locally).

#### **Additional documented impacts:**

- ▶ The University's investment in engaged research leveraged \$21 million in external funds between 2009 and 2015.
- ▶ The University's strong reputation as a leader in engaged scholarship drew high quality students, faculty, and staff to campus.
- ▶ Evidencing the importance of the newly hired engaged learning coordinator, the report showed increasing faculty demand for the incorporation of engaged learning and pedagogy across campus and across courses.
- ▶ In many cases, those research products with highest social impact proved to be products other than peer-reviewed publications.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Weaving community engagement into the fabric of universities is critical for developing solutions to complex challenges. Students, faculty, staff, and administrative leadership set expectations for engaged scholarship, identify best practices that align with campus goals, and promote programs that foster and reward engaged research. For universities aiming to institutionalize greater engagement, we recommend a baseline assessment that includes defining terms and establishing clear and measurable expectations for engagement. Thereafter, institutionalization can take many forms, including establishing OPEs, resources to support engaged scholars, and policies that reduce barriers to collaboration. Certification systems and evaluation rubrics provide a road map for monitoring and assessment over time. This is the three-step foundation for building an engaged campus that values community engagement and institutional structure that incentivizes researchers to maximize the impact and relevance of the modern research university.

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