

CIC Committee on Engagement

DEFINING OUTREACH/ENGAGEMENT

Objective: To derive a common (or near common) definition of outreach-engagement.

A. Starting Points

Three definitions as starters

Michigan State University

Advocating and Modeling the Engaged University. Outreach is a form of scholarship that cuts across teaching, research, and service. It involves generating, transmitting, applying and preserving knowledge for the direct benefit of external audiences in ways that are consistent with university and unit missions.(Provost's Report on Outreach, 1993).

Ohio State University

“Outreach and engagement: It represents that aspect of teaching that enables learning beyond the campus walls, that aspect of research that makes what we discover useful beyond the academic community, that aspect of service that directly benefits the public.” (Impact Ohio, Bobby Moser, 2002).

“What is outreach and engagement? It is that process by which we bring the university's intellectual capital to bear on societal needs... The ‘engagement’ in outreach and engagement represents our renewed commitment to sharing and reciprocity with our community partners. An institution engaged with its community—however that community is defined—works to define its problems jointly, sets common goals and agendas, develops measures of success together, and pools or leverages some combination of university, public, and private resources. (Connections, Bobby Moser)

University of Wisconsin

Outreach scholarship is conducted in all areas of the university's mission: teaching, research, and service. It involves the creation, integration, transfer and application of knowledge for the direct benefit of external audiences.

Outreach scholarship is regarded to be of high quality when there is evidence that it has resulted in significant outcomes.

(Commitment to the Wisconsin Idea: University of Wisconsin Madison Council on Outreach)

B. March 31, Chicago: The Chicago Definition

Definition of Engagement: The Committee agreed on the following working definition of Engagement:

Engagement is a transformative partnership for discovery and learning with shared expectations, resources, expertise and values, and mutually beneficial results that: Enrich scholarship and research, contribution to the common good, prepare citizen scholars, impact curriculum (content and process), endorse democratic values and civic responsibility, serve as model for democratic discussion, address critical societal issues (e.g., economic development), and is infused across the university. Engagement may be local or global, and may be internally or externally focused.

Modifications:

Howard Martin: As requested here is my wording for the definition of engagement:

Engagement is the partnering of university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship and research, impact curriculum (content and process) prepare citizen scholars, endorse democratic values and civic responsibility, address critical societal issues (e.g. Economic development) and in general contribute to the public good.

This is somewhat shorter than what was first proposed and perhaps a better wordsmith than I (Trevor, take your journalist's pen to it!) can make it even more to the point.

Vic Bloomfield:

I like your more concise definition of "engagement", except for the "partnering", which I'm not convinced is a word. How about "partnership"? Likewise "impact" as a verb, which my American Heritage

Dictionary (admittedly not a 21st century version) says is "unacceptable to a large majority of the Usage Panel." How about "enhance"?

Engagement is the partnership of university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship and research, enhance curricular content and process, prepare citizen scholars, endorse democratic values and civic responsibility, address critical societal issues (e.g., economic development), and in general contribute to the public good.

Chet Rzonca

Engagement is the partnership of university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors for the betterment of all partners.

Please remember that I am practicing at a dean's level, a position lower than most of you hold at your respective institutions. And while I realize the transformation you are suggesting, I am wondering how traditional "outreach" services provided by institutions such as ours will be allowed in our engagement definition and recognized in data collection instruments.

While not arguing for a longer version, I am concerned that many of our traditional activities appear

to be missing from the recent instrument we were asked to complete. Our College of Medicine, (and I assume those at your institutions) has many cooperative clinics, offers telemedicine to local areas and provides medical care to any indigent patient in Iowa. Our Institute for Public Affairs provides consultant services and training to local and county governments, and spends time at the local level to help develop strategic plans and strategies to improve the lives of local citizens. Similar "engagement" activities are cooperatively provided by our Labor Center, and the Iowa Nonprofit Resource Center. To this I would add the traditional service areas of the Center for Conferences and Institutes and credit courses and programs offered in many locations, some in cooperation with graduate centers responding to local needs.

Similar activities/services with various degrees of partnership comprise the portfolio of state universities and land grant colleges. I realize I am being traditional (age factor) but do see this in the proposed definition but lacking in our instrument. My struggle and question, is "Are these traditional outreach services a part of engagement"?

Vic Bloomfield

I think traditional outreach services should definitely be counted as part of engagement. The big challenge is to get the rest of the university to see the ways in which non-outreach teaching and scholarship also may count.

I shared with Harry Boyte our attempts to define engagement. He pointed out something that had been bothering me subliminally: that our justification for increased engagement is couched largely in terms of economic development. Harry writes: This note makes me think it might be useful for the CIC committee to look at the Kellogg NASULGC final statement, "Renewing the Covenant," to get a broader background for the civic engagement definition. As now written, it doesn't convey any of the sense of larger democratic challenge and crisis that higher education has the duty and the (potential) capacity to take leadership around, that all three main statements (Wingspread, The Presidents' Declaration, and Repairing the Breach) convey. For instance, in the current CIC definition, the definition of contribution offered in economic development, but the NASULGC document specifically cites the narrowing of goals of higher education to economic advance as a sign of deep democratic travail. The NASULGC document also talks about declining participation and the loss of a sense of the common good as challenges higher education needs to take up "as not only agents but architects of democracy" ...I've attached "Renewing the Covenant," as a pdf file, and hope that it may be helpful in our deliberations.

Howard Martin

In many ways your situation in terms of responsibilities parallels mine regardless of which title I am using and the type of activities you identify are definitely viewed as evidence of our institution being "engaged" Hence, I and the leadership here would argue for their inclusion. Where we, Michigan and Indiana differ from Penn State, MSU, Purdue, Minnesota and Ohio State is that we do not have Cooperative Extension in our bailiwick- and that unit alone accounts for much activity in the realm of engagement(that is reflected in the instrument). This difference makes the challenge to devise a common set of benchmarks quite formidable to us, it seems.

Vic, however, puts his finger on an issue that affects us all-that of recognition for many outreach activities in the faculty reward system. Though we have had, for many years, criteria for judging excellence in outreach/ extension etc, we do not have consistency across the faculty academic divisions, Arts and Humanities, Biological Sciences, Physical Sciences, and Social Studies, never mind

at the department level. While we made much progress with publication of "Commitment to the Wisconsin Idea: A Guide to Documenting and Evaluating Excellence in Outreach Scholarship" which was made available to departments and to the Divisional Committees where tenure recommendations are essentially approved or not, the amount of attention paid to the guidelines varies as the membership of the committees changes.

C. Kellogg Commission: Sixth Report (Distributed by Vic)

P. 22.

“By engagement, we refer to a redesign of basic university functions so the institution becomes even more productively involved with communities, however community is defined. Going well beyond most conceptions of public service, which emphasize a one-way transfer of university expertise to the public, the engagement ideal envisions new public/university partnerships defined by mutual respect for what each partner brings to the table.”

And from the number of commitments described in the document, the one that seems most germane to our committee may be:

p. 22

“Conscious efforts to organize the resources and expertise at our institutions to bring them to bear in a coherent way on community, state, national, and international problems.”

D. Dictionary views (excluding betrothal and military definitions) (forgive my liking of old dictionaries)

The (Oxford) Universal Dictionary of the English Language (1938)

“Engage: bind oneself by a promise, pledge; to impose an obligation on , make an action obligatory for” (p. 366)

“Engaged: having one’s time occupied, being oneself occupied or busy, through some fixed arrangement.” (P. 366).

Webster’s Universal Dictionary of the English Language (1936)

“Engage: To cause to give a pledge, to bind, as by contract of faith” (and I really like the 10th definition given”

“In mechanics, to interlock with so as to produce motion, as one cogwheel with another” (p. 561, vol. 1)

“Engaged: in mechanics, geared together, interlocked.” (P. 561, vol.1).

The definitions from mechanics fit very nicely with modern day systems concepts and stress the interdependence, inter-relatedness of partnership, which also is captured in the Kellogg “definition.”

E. Attempt to gell

When one examines the Kellogg definition in the Sixth Report and the original Commission Report, one is struck by the lack of precision to the definition of Engagement or Engaged University. I believe that this is intentional, because to force too much precision into the definition one

potentially limits innovative ways for institutions to shape definition at the local level. What is contained in the Kellogg Definition (Sixth Report):

By engagement,

! “redesign of basic university functions”
(allows universities to innovate in re-designing, based on the institution’s historical mission: e.g., liberal arts, research intensive, community college, land grant, etc.)

! “productively involved with communities (however community is defined) “
(allows broad definition of community, local, state, national, international, business, schools, human services, etc)

! “envisions new public/university partnerships defined by mutual respect for what each partner brings to the table.”
(captures the sense of interlocking, interdependent, cooperative, mutual gain)

My sense is that this definition (stated above, but without the “economic development example, per Harry’s comment) captures the essence of the Kellogg Sixth Report and dictionary definitions of “engage” “engaged” and “engagement”

Engagement is the partnership of university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship and research, enhance curricular content and process, prepare citizen scholars, endorse democratic values and civic responsibility, address critical societal issues, and in general contribute to the public good.

So, I recommend that we adopt this as our working definition. It seems to be sufficiently inclusive, yet flexible enough for individual institutions to generate good fit with mission. Moreover, it will enable us to proceed with generation of benchmarks appropriate to each of the domains noted:

- to enrich scholarship and research,**
- enhance curricular content and process,**
- prepare citizen scholars,**
- endorse democratic values and civic responsibility,**
- address critical societal issues,**
- contribute to the public good**

or to generate benchmarks that are generic across domains.