The Role of Partnerships in Achieving the Vision: Tracking and Assessing Community Engagement

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The Role of Partnerships in Achieving the Vision: Tracking and Assessing Community Engagement

Abstract
This presentation was given at the Association for Institutional Research Forum in New Orleans, Louisiana on June 2, 2016.

Keywords
community, community engagement, institutional tracking, institutional assessment, VCU, Virginia Commonwealth University, engagement, engaged-research, community-engaged research, CEnR

Disciplines
Higher Education

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The Role of Partnerships in Achieving the Vision: Tracking and Assessing Community Engagement

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Association for Institutional Research Forum
New Orleans, Louisiana, June 2, 2016
Statement of Aspirational Practice for Institutional Research

Calls for an expanded definition of “decision makers”, a student-focused paradigm, and the greater coordination of institutional studies.

But to achieve this vision, it will be necessary to define, develop and expand the scope and focus of internal partnerships dealing with community engagement data, outcomes and impact.
Today, we will ...

- Discuss the **national context** for measuring engagement with and impact on communities.
- Begin to **identify the challenges** facing institutions in their efforts to define and measure engagement and community impact and current approaches being deployed.
- **Learn strategies to develop and maintain strategic partnerships** across the institution to embrace and support an expanded set of decision-makers, to ground the efforts in the impact on students, and to coordinate institutional studies.
Hello
my name is
We are a premier urban, public research university focused on academic success.

Established in 1838

Located in Richmond, Virginia

More than 171,000 alumni worldwide
About Richmond

» Virginia’s capital city
» Home to six Fortune 500 companies
» Growing innovation ecosystem
» Thriving arts community
The VCU population

» 31,288 students
» 100 countries represented in student population
» 11,388 employees
» 2,170 full-time instructional faculty
Academic programs

13 schools and one college

222 degree and certificate programs

64 baccalaureate degree programs
74 master’s degree programs
40 doctoral degree programs
3 first-professional degree programs
41 post-baccalaureate and post-master’s certificate programs
VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

STRATEGIC PLAN: QUEST FOR DISTINCTION

Theme I
Become a leader among national research universities in providing all students with high-quality learning/living experiences focused on inquiry, discovery and innovation in a global environment.

Theme II
Attain distinction as a fully integrated urban, public research university through contributions in human health, research, scholarship and creative expression that advance knowledge and enhance the quality of life.

Theme III
Become a national model for community engagement and regional impact.

31,163 students
Very high research activity
Community-engaged
Located in Richmond, Virginia
Partnership
Office of Planning and Decision Support

Accurate
Empower decision makers
Accessible
Enhance institutional effectiveness
Actionable
Maintain compliance
Mission
The VCU Division of Community Engagement mobilizes university-community partnerships that generate innovative solutions to societal challenges and prepares the engaged citizens of tomorrow.

Vision
VCU is a community of engaged citizens, working together, changing lives.

Division of Community Engagement
Community Engagement describes the collaboration between higher education institutions and their larger communities [local, national, global] for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.

Carnegie Foundation, 2006
Why do (we) need institutional data on community engagement activities and impact?
Learn how our partnerships make a difference

UNDERSTAND
the range & scope of community-engaged activities across teaching, research, & outreach.

IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES
for university-community partnerships to creatively address community-identified needs.

STRENGTHEN CAPACITY
by understanding challenges & removing barriers to develop quality university-community partnerships.

ASSESS IMPACT
of community-engaged activities on students, faculty, staff & the larger community.

SHARE STORIES
that show our values in action, inform & inspire.

Community engagement data will be used to support VCU’s Quest for Distinction & uphold VCU as a university committed to engagement that transforms lives.
State of the Field

• Agree there is a need for this kind of data

• No consistent measures

• No ONE way to collect the information

• Largely focused on understanding the landscape
University-Wide Data: Challenges

- Decentralized, large & complex institutions
- Going broad vs. deep
- Feasibility
- Sustainability & Responsiveness
What needs to be collected?

Who else would like this information?

What systems are already in place?

What is the operational definition?

Who would be good partner(s)?

How can the information be gathered?
VCU’s Most Important Discovery

This is not a linear process.
VCU’s Discoveries

Existing resources and processes

Being central to mission requires integration

Key Strategies

• Internal collaborations
• Adapt university-wide tools, *whenever possible*

Find Internal Partners

• What’s the value of this data?
• Who else has or wants this information?
• Who is collecting similar information?
• Who understands institutional data?
• How are they using data?
• Formal vs informal?
Who are potential partners?

- Student Affairs
- Office of Research
- Human Resources
- Libraries
- Development
- Academic Affairs
- Government Relations
- Public Affairs
- Finance and Administration
- Police

And who else?

Institutional Research
Identify and Adapt Data Collection Mechanism(s)

Considerations:

• Level of data collection and dissemination
• Existing vs. new system
• Systematic vs. episodic
• Quality and type of the infrastructure
• Resources
Examples of Existing Data Collection Systems

- HR and student information systems (e.g. Banner)
- Institutional Review Board
- Sponsored Programs
- Human Resources
- Publications (Web of Science, PubMed)
- Faculty reporting
- Internship databases
Identify and define what you want to collect
Data Collected at VCU

- Service-Learning
- Community-Engaged Research (CEnR)
- Student Community Service
- University-Community partnerships
- Impact as an anchor
- Faculty/Staff Community Service

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Data Dashboard

University-wide data

- Service-learning
- Student service
- CEnR
Partnership Map
Open source CTSA technology
Creates a research network
102 universities registered as VIVO users
VCU faculty profiles include:
• Publications
• Research interest areas
• Courses taught
• Other
VCU the **only** university to develop a Community-Engaged Partnership Map extension.
The Map includes interactive information on:

- Community organizations
- VCU and VCUHealth units
- Focus topics
- Regional reach
- Activity types
Flexible Reporting And Analysis

- University, unit, and individual faculty levels
- Neighborhood and other geographic area
- ‘Linked data’ reporting
- Research and engagement activity
- Faculty expertise
- Courses
- Publications
Anchor institutions are defined as, “place-based entities such as universities and hospitals that are tied to their surroundings by mission, invested capital, or relationships to customers, employees, and vendors”

(Dubb, McKinley, & Howard, 2013, p. v)
Pilot Anchor Measurement Framework

**Economic Development**
- Workforce
- Real Estate
- Equitable Hiring

**Education**
- Access
  - Pipeline Programs
  - 1285 Students
  - 109 Matriculants

**Health**
- Access
  - 37.4% ER
  - 62.6% non-ER

**Green & Safe Neighborhoods**
- Safe Campuses & Streets
- Greening VCU
  - STARS Silver Ranking

**Cultural Vitality**
- Public Events
  - 1% Not Free
  - 96% Free

**Community Building**
- Partnerships
  - Engagement
    - 17,602 Students
    - 1,316,000 Hours
    - $29,675,000 Value
Starting our VCU Conversation

Collaboration between

• Office of Planning & Decision Support
• Division of Community Engagement

Big picture view

• How to align VCU assets with community needs?

Whole picture view

• Including hard resources is new step as an “asset”

Ensure Data Quality

• Universal definitions
• Data governance structure
• Systems integration
• Communications and training
• Compliance
To guide & assist with the continued development of data infrastructure to track and assess impact of VCU’s community engagement activities on students, faculty & staff, and community partners.
Member Roles & Responsibilities

Assistance & Guidance
To have relevant expertise to provide guidance.
Expertise can include:
- Administrative & technical knowledge about current/potential data mechanisms
- Community engagement knowledge and experience

Process Improvement
To assist in **evaluating** and improving data collection processes.
Includes, but not limited to:
- Evaluation of existing mechanisms
- Operationalization of terms
- Identify key data points
- Identify key units & existing mechanisms

Feasibility & Prioritizing
- To assist in **assessing the feasibility** of proposed data collection efforts
- To provide guidance in identifying and **prioritizing future efforts**
Partnership
Resources


Resources


Resources


VCU Partnership Map http://communitynetwork.vcu.edu/partnerMap

VCU Data Dashboard http://community.vcu.edu/resources--toolkit/community-engagement-dashboard/

Anchor Institutions


Anchor Institutions


Thank You

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