ATTAINING

Carnegie's

COMMUNITY-ENGAGEMENT CLASSIFICATION

By James J. Zuiches and the NC State Community-engagement Task Force

Now that the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has designated a first round of institutions that meet its criteria for engagement with their communities, those of us at North Carolina State University involved with winning the classification for the institution offer our reflections on the process for other colleges and universities preparing similar applications. We learned a great deal about our own institution as we addressed the concepts and processes underpinning the documentation of engagement. More importantly, we discuss how we defined, interpreted, and responded to measures of institutional identity and engagement activities. We also offer lessons learned about the importance of logistics and discuss the benefits of this effort.

DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED

The Carnegie framework requires responses to two major sets of questions to document an institution's engagement with its community. The first, *Foundational Indicators*, required affirmative answers along with substantiating evidence. If the institution answered in the negative to a majority

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of questions about institutional culture and commitment, there was no reason to complete the rest of the documentation.

Foundational Indicators contained the "Institutional Identity and Culture" and "Institutional Commitment" sections of the framework. Documenting these areas stimulated intense reflection by the task force created to pursue the classification and subsequently helped reinforce several elements of our university's focus on community engagement.

We could respond that NC State's mission and vision statements did indeed include community engagement as a priority and that we recognized such engagement with campus-wide awards and celebrations. Our supporting evidence included quotes from publications and speeches by the chancellor, as well as information about budget allocations, fund-raising successes, and sponsored projects.

Our organizational structures also promote and support community engagement. In addition to the Office of Extension, Engagement and Economic Development (EE&ED), NC State has three organizations that facilitate such activities both on and off campus: 1) an Academy of Outstanding Faculty Engaged in Extension, which provides recognition for remarkable achievements; 2) a University Standing Committee on Extension and Engagement, consisting of faculty, staff, and students, which provides advice and counsel on all aspects of the EE&ED Office's programs; and 3) an Extension Operations Council, which includes leaders from all 10 colleges and about a dozen other units at NC State. The council aims to optimize communication among, and coordination and implementation of, EE&ED programs across the campus, including those in academic programs, student affairs, and research.

Not every question was so easily answered with a "yes," however. We debated how to respond to the question about whether we have mechanisms in place to assess the community's perceptions of our engagement. We said we did, and given our decentralized management structure, we substantiated our claim by listing seven examples of such assessment within different organizational units. But since we are decentralized, we could not answer "yes" to a later question: Do systematic campus-wide assessment or recording mechanisms exist to evaluate and/or track institutional engagement in community?

Finally, we provided extensive detail in response to a crucial question: Do the institutional policies for promotion and tenure reward the scholarship of community engagement? Our policies that form the basis for reappointment, promotion, and tenure decisions at the departmental, college, and university levels do include a requirement for individual faculty and their departmental leaders to develop a "statement of mutual expectations" that identifies which of "six realms of faculty responsibility" each faculty member will emphasize.

Three of the six realms have special relevance to EE&ED activities: "extension and engagement with constituencies outside the university," "technological and managerial innovation," and "service in professional societies and service and engagement within the university itself." The other three realms may also contain community-engagement elements: "teaching and mentoring of undergraduate and graduate students," "discovery of knowledge through discipline-guided inquiry," and "creative artistry and literature." These policies create an environment in which the scholarship associated with extension and engagement can permeate faculty work. (For more information, see http://www.ncsu.edu/policies/employment/faculty/POL05.20.1.php.)

Once the foundational indicators were documented, NC State needed to demonstrate community engagement in two categories, "Curricular Engagement" and "Outreach and Partnerships." [Editor's note: see Amy Driscoll's article in this issue for a discussion of these categories.] Within them, however, the definition of "community" was left somewhat open-ended. What is this community with which we are engaged? Is it only "place-based" or regional, which seemed to be Carnegie's emphasis, or could it be more broadly defined?

We reviewed policy documents from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, *Returning to our Roots: The Engaged Institution* (1999), and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities' *Tools and Insights for Universities Called to Regional Stewardship* (2006), plus the extensive literature on communities of practice, place, interest, and purpose. Because each of these sources identified the same key attributes of mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity, we decided to expand the definition of the term "community" to include "identifiable groups of individuals that share similar interests, concerns, and educational needs around a subject-matter area." This definition reflected the scope of our activities as a land-grant institution, including engagement with for-profit, non-profit, and government organizations, as well as with public-interest organizations and groups of students, teachers, and citizens.

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Collecting and combining this information into coherent and accurate responses to Carnegie's framework also required serious discussion. Did our information reflect what was actually happening and, although our numbers were not going to be audited by a third party, could we stand by them as if they were? After that discussion and a final check of all statistics, task-force members finally reached a consensus before we signed off on each section.

THE DOCUMENTATION PROCESS

The Carnegie Foundation's application process required documentation that was, in Amy Driscoll's words, "extensive and substantive, focused on significant qualities, activities, and institutional provisions that ensure an institutional approach to community engagement." Our administration knew that Carnegie had conducted a nationwide pilot in 2004-05 of the new classification with 14 institutions, including two land-grant universities—Michigan State University and the University of Minnesota. We consulted with colleagues at these and other institutions even before our task force was formed. Then, after further consultation with various campus and stakeholder groups, the NC State Carnegie Community Engagement Task Force was appointed.

The chair of the task force had written numerous reports on the value of extension as a core land-grant university function and had led faculty efforts to revise the criteria for promotion and tenure to reward extension and engagement activities. Another member had led a humanities extension program that had been cited for taking the humanities to rural areas throughout the state. The director of the service-learning program brought to the task her knowledge of many other faculty- and student-engagement programs. The director of institutional research provided access to university databases. The Wake County Cooperative Extension director brought years of experience as a county extension leader in an urban county and access to information about rural counties. One member connected the task force to private sector and industry partners, another to natural-resource partners.

While the Colleges of Humanities and Social Sciences, Education, and Physical and Mathematical Sciences do not typically assign faculty formal extension responsibilities, each had faculty members who were leading such programs. By including those faculty members on the panel, we drew attention to the efforts at community engagement in these colleges. One task-force member was past chair of the Academy of Outstanding Faculty in Extension; another led Science House, which provides experiential learning for math and science high-school teachers across the state; and yet another represented NC State's non-credit and distance-education programs. The postdoctoral researcher on the task force

focused on engagement between NC State and other higher-education institutions. In total, the members represented five of the university's 10 colleges and four major extension and engagement programs, as well as institutional research.

The task force's charge was twofold: first, to communicate the diversity and breadth of NC State's EE&ED programs to the Carnegie Foundation, and second, to contribute to the strategic-planning processes already under way throughout the university by inventorying its community-engagement activities. To do so in the time allotted, we held nearly a dozen weekly meetings and exchanged countless emails from June to Labor Day in 2006.

Timely completion of an internal review and approval by the task force, review by the chancellor, and electronic submission to meet Carnegie's September deadline required creativity by task force members. Summer vacations, illnesses, professional meetings, classes, and current duties often required call-in participation, as well as email review of texts and numbers. In mid-August, for example, three members of the task force, including the chairman, were on vacation at the Chautauqua Institution in upstate New York. But even there, they edited a draft of the entire report and communicated daily with the staff and task force members in North Carolina. Throughout the process, the postdoctoral researcher prompted the group to verify both statistics and text.

After submitting the documentation electronically to the Carnegie Foundation, we posted the complete report on our EE&ED Web site at http://www.ncsu.edu/extension/about/carnegie.php. We also shared the report with senior administrators, deans, and our three extension and engagement committees. A week after the submission to Carnegie, we held a task-force celebration/debriefing luncheon and recognized each member's contribution to this team effort on behalf of the university and North Carolina.

But the best reward came two months after our submission when NC State Chancellor James Oblinger received a letter from Carnegie informing him, "Your institution is one of our newly classified, community engaged colleges and universities. Your classification affirms the institutionalization of Community Engagement at North Carolina State University, and extends to both Curricular Engagement and Outreach and Partnerships."

LESSONS LEARNED

Although Carnegie recognized many institutions that may have completed the process in many different ways, we offer seven recommendations to those pursuing the new classification:

1. Create a task force with representative, active, experienced members who have a history of working together successfully. Many of our participants had been involved with revising NC State's reappointment, promotion, and tenure guidelines. Several were (and still remain) active on the Extension Operations Council. Other members were able to gain access to hard-to-find data and information. All were committed to a shared vision, yet each could view our claims with a critical eye.

2. Schedule regular task-force meetings in a convenient place with each member present, in person or by phone, to create momentum and reinforce performance. We met in the equivalent of the proverbial "skunk works," an old metal building with limited air conditioning but with free and easy parking. We set and met assigned deadlines based on a spreadsheet keyed to Carnegie's documentation framework. Members divided into subgroups, each responsible for gathering specific data and drafting sections of the report, which were assembled for review at weekly meetings.

3. Reach out to leaders in units on campus where programs are conducted and records are kept—a vital prerequisite on a decentralized campus. Whenever possible, make the request in person. Describe your need or word the survey instrument you use in campus-vernacular terms instead of the language of the Carnegie framework. In no case did we send the entire framework in order to gather specific information.

4. Debate issues of inclusion, exclusion, or interpretation. In our process, any member could ask of the data or its interpretation, is it true? Can we stand behind it? Will non-task-force colleagues agree? For example, we debated whether the practicum

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requirements of teacher education/certification programs should be defined as engagement and concluded that they should not. After we wrote a section, the department or program leader who had provided the original information reviewed it; when the task force reached agreement, we signed off on the section.

5. Check your numbers and assumptions. We grappled with the quality of our statistics. Reporting students' participation in service-learning (SL) courses is a case in point. The questions seem simple: "How many students participated in service learning or community-based learning courses in the most recent academic year? What percentage is that of all students?" But first, one must define "SL or community-based courses" and then determine the number and percentage of students taking such courses. Since we do not have a formal designation of such courses, we asked colleges for a list of the ones that academic deans or department heads felt incorporated service learning and other community-based learning. Then, based on student registrations, we calculated that 5,446 students had participated in such courses in the previous academic year. Had we assumed that no student took more than one course, we would have estimated that a quarter of undergraduates had taken such a course. But assuming instead that students register for more than one service-learning course and that they average three meant that 1,500 different students had participated—five percent of all students. We opted for the latter, more conservative approach and submitted an estimate of 1,500 students taking such courses.

6. Clarify expectations about documentation by directly consulting Carnegie. For example, we learned that we were limited to 20 examples of partnerships, even though we could have included many more. In selecting the 20, we tried to make sure each college was represented at least once—with the balance representing other key programs and partners, such as the Institute for Emerging Issues and Sea Grant. To recognize all the instances of community service we had discovered, we put both the official submission and a longer version on our EE&ED Web site after we submitted the electronic report to Carnegie.

7. Be flexible, and expect to revise the entries early and late in the process. The framework gradually filled up as the summer melted away. Yet revisions as a result of word limits and new information, which arrived from one unit on the day of our submission to Carnegie, meant careful attention had to be paid to details. This may require hiring or assigning someone to manage the entire process.

Benefits and Follow-Up Activities

Our self-assessment and intensive reflection worked well. We now have created a baseline for many of our institution's EE&ED programs; for example, we know the number of community-based or service-learning courses. But we also recognize that many opportunities for improvement remain. For instance, we do not know the actual percentage of students who take such community-based courses. We discovered after submission that we did not capture and honor all partnerships or programs, including some significant life-science and engineering engagement with teachers and students in elementary and high schools. Other partnerships with local agencies, community organizations, and civic groups now have been identified.

Some new programs are being created and others expanded. Our Extension Operations Council continues to discuss how to energize engagement in additional campus units, and more units are incorporating engagement into their thinking for centers and institutes. The provost's office has made a major new commitment to strengthen our service-learning program by creating a Center for Excellence in Curricular Engagement. We also identified some issues that need improvement, such as the systematic assessment of impacts, and we have appointed a task force to benchmark economic-development impacts.

Recognition and rewards are vital to a successful community-engagement effort. So as part of our follow-up, in January 2007 we held a symposium on rewarding people's extension and engagement efforts in promotion and tenure decisions; it involved more than 150 junior and senior faculty, department heads, deans, and administrators. We also recognized some new (as well as long-standing) partnerships during our annual awards ceremony.

To show a greater commitment to our home community, NC State has joined the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities and has held a series of networking luncheons to identify faculty working in Raleigh and Durham on urban health, neighborhood quality, and human-capital development. More than 60 faculty members from campus departments and in counties' Cooperative Extension offices—from units as diverse as social work, wildlife biology, and design—are partnering with appropriate community groups.

The need for more resources is clear. We have organized a grant-writing workshop to increase our success in winning funding for community-engagement and curricular-engagement programs. Over the past two years, externally sponsored public-service projects totaled $38 million and $35 million respectively. We will continue to monitor future efforts and success. Meanwhile, the state legislature gave us some additional one-time funds to increase support for extension, engagement, and economic-development programs.

Some statewide initiatives may reflect the fact that Carnegie named both NC State and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill as "engaged universities." In 2007 the University of North Carolina (UNC) Board of Governors established an Award for Excellence in Public Service "to recognize sustained, distinguished, and superb achievement in university public service and outreach, and contributions to improving the quality of life of the citizens of North Carolina." This new award complements the long-standing UNC awards for excellence in research and teaching. UNC also has initiated a major statewide effort to identify the challenges facing our state and "ways to meet these needs through programs and curricula, scholarship and research efforts and public service engagement."

Finally, pursuing this elective classification stimulated intense discussions across the campus about NC State's commitment to community engagement, and the process generated a new energy for greater investment by the colleges and units. When the Carnegie Foundation provides the next opportunity in 2008, we encourage campuses with a similar commitment to respond. We are convinced that it is worth the effort. **C**