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# Creating a Supportive Environment for Community-University Engagement: Conceptual Frameworks

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## Starting Premise

The changing nature of knowledge production, global issues and the role of education is affecting the intellectual strategies, relationships, societal roles and expectations that we attribute to our universities as well as to how our primary and secondary educational system prepares students for the workplace, for citizenship and for tertiary education. Our educational institutions are beginning to work together and interact in different ways, both internally and externally, to create research and educational environments that are easy to traverse and responsive to the changing knowledge and skill needs of a global, multidisciplinary, collaborative, and evolving community landscape in order to address the challenges of life in the regions we serve.

In this paper we will describe forces for change that are encouraging tertiary institutions to develop exchange relationships with external communities for the purpose of generating knowledge of mutual benefit. We will define key terms relating to community engagement, describe the evolution of concepts and forms of engagement including its impacts on teaching and learning, explore the unique role of partnerships in engagement, and conclude with some suggestions regarding the management of the significant and challenging organizational changes which are necessary to create a commitment to and capacity for engagement.

## What is Community Engagement?

Engagement is a distinctive approach to teaching and research that recognizes that some learning or discovery outcomes require access to external entities with distinctive knowledge and expertise. The hallmark of engagement is the development of partnerships that ensure a mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge between the University and the community. Community engagement is transforming higher education in many institutions in nations around the world (UK, Spain, Germany, India, Japan, Vietnam, Thailand, Philippines, Australia, USA, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, and South Africa, among others). The forces energizing the rapid spread of this innovative idea -- that both academic institutions and communities could both benefit by working

together to exchange expertise and wisdom to generate new knowledge – arise from many directions. Especially important have been:

- The changing nature of knowledge generation and the widespread diffusion of knowledge across society (Gibbons et al., 1994).
- The urgent need to summon our collective wisdom to address critical social, economic, cultural, and environmental threats.
- The awareness the contemporary students of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century resonate to engaged learning with productive outcomes for communities as well as themselves, and that quality engaged learning can improve learning achievement, retention, and social/civic responsibility (Compact 2006).
- The practical reality that academic involvement in increasing community capacity, educational attainment requires collaboration for knowledge exchange.

Perhaps the most widely-adopted definition of engagement that has emerged reads:

*“Community Engagement describes the 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” (Carnegie 2006). Note the emphasis on mutual benefits, knowledge exchange, and an expectation of partnerships that create reciprocity among participants.*

This is bold, new territory for higher education and provides clear, specific criteria for separating community engagement as an academic and inclusive knowledge and learning relationship between tertiary institutions and their communities from older more one-way forms of academic interaction with communities. For example, public service, outreach, extension are all important and useful modes where academic knowledge is conveyed to communities in ways that position higher education as the expert and communities as the recipient of knowledge. In community engagement, academic staff, students, staff, and community members are exchanging and co-creating knowledge to respond to community needs while also enhancing research, teaching and learning activities for the academic partner. They are learning, exchanging, discovering together. This kind of respectful recognition of the goals, expectations, wisdom and knowledge we all bring to the table to address any particular issue has been observed to produce profound results and benefits as listed above. You can imagine the dynamics when community members are positioned as “knowers” and experts, and academics act as learners and listeners. Developing this capacity for exchange relationships expands all participants’ learning, and expands knowledge in ways that have broad applicability across academic and social settings.

Community engagement has been adopted by many institutions and communities and has been the subject of considerable research on impact and practice (see for example: Community- Campus Partnerships at <http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/index.html>; National Service-Learning Clearinghouse at [www.servicelearning.org](http://www.servicelearning.org)). At its most fundamental level, engagement is dependent on quality partnerships with communities. What do we mean by communities; who is community? Engagement requires dialogue between academics and community members from the beginning to define issues,

establish areas where collaboration and exchange are possible and useful, set expectations and goals, and determine who must be at the table to achieve those goals. So the definition and description of community is determined by both the nature of the topic at hand and through community influence and input to project design and management. This is a massive shift from traditional views of education as raiding communities for knowledge and wisdom without returning any information of value.

One might question why communities, especially indigenous, migrant, economically-disadvantaged, or disabled communities would want to agree to work with academic institutions. Recent research found that experienced community partners are motivated to develop project connections with universities if there is evidence of commitment to reciprocity and mutual benefit, as defined by the community. In particular, partners look for evidence that academic partners are willing to spend time getting to know the community, listening to community voices, respecting cultural values and practices, and sharing resources and knowledge in ways that are useful and relevant to community initiatives and interests. Partners are especially keen to work with university students so they can encourage students to develop a sense of social and civic responsibility to become involved in communities, and to be more competent and engaged in interaction with diverse cultures and life experiences (Sandy and Holland 2006).

Engagement is already expanding beyond the context of single institutions and their specific communities of interest. Increasingly, institutional connections and exchanges will link together a region's educational institutions and open up access to their intellectual resources. The issues faced by communities and regions around the world have so much in common – all things local are also global. Hopefully, the networks of engaged academic institutions provide a venue for sharing good ideas around the world. Conferences and journals are springing up around the world to provide venues for academics and communities to share knowledge and best practices for further improvement.

However, big changes in academia have already taken place and there are more yet to come. To be candid, despite the clear motivating factors and a growing body of evidence of the benefits of engagement to higher education and to communities, many people from both sectors continue to resist the idea of community engagement as an appropriate role for higher education. Some academics question the wisdom, the intellectual quality, the affordability, and the sustainability of partnerships for knowledge production. Some community members express persistent distrust of higher education's motivations. The key for these questioning individuals is to witness the further achievement necessary for changes that will move higher education away from traditional values around detached observation of society to academic values that recognize that key expertise resides outside universities (Gibbons 1994). These changes, and strategies to achieve them, are discussed in the rest of this paper. To become a platform and organizing hub around which new working relationships will form and develop, tertiary institutions will need to take a fresh look at their own organizations and values. They must examine how they are organized, how they operate, how they attract and develop their intellectual assets and how they support an array of working relationships---both internal and external---that support new forms of scholarship, new approaches to education and new approaches to

addressing societal problems in partnership with community organizations become the norm.

A key question will be how an institution can maintain its identity and its integrity when the boundaries and definitions traditionally associated become increasingly irrelevant and new patterns take the place of the old ways of building institutional pride and prestige. Higher education, like most industries, operates largely in its self-interest and in a highly competitive environment. Such is the political and economic reality. As universities become less self-contained and more collaborative with external partners, they will need to develop new ways to define their institutional identity and purpose and new standards of excellence and quality assurance. This has already begun in the USA with the decision of regional higher education accreditation organizations and the Carnegie Classification System for Higher Education to adopt standards and rating systems related to institutional uptake of community engagement. Clearly, community engagement is now associated with institutional performance, in accordance with specific institutional missions. Engagement is a productive approach to increasing the diversity of academic institutions which can be of great benefit to societal learning and discovery capacities (Holland 2005).

The nature of the changes that must take place within our tertiary institutions will be shaped by our distinctive institutional histories, our current relationships with the people we serve and the resources available to us. These changes will develop in an institution-specific way. There are, however a few elements that each model will share that will guide our development. As we discuss the changes that lie ahead, we should keep three lessons in mind that we have derived from the study of engagement at many different institutions. First, in implementing community engagement, one size does not fit all. Each interpretation of engagement has features that reflect the institutional history and the “sense of place” that comes from the nature of the policy and community environment that shapes the institution, its experiences and its priorities. Second, although engagement has evolved over time and is affected by local contexts, a set of core principles have been developed regarding the quality and conduct of community engagement strategies. Despite superficial differences in the issues addressed, the participants involved, and the objectives of the work all true engagement is at its heart 1) mutually beneficial for all parties, 2) reciprocal in its nature, and 3) designed to promote learning and the exchange of knowledge in the search for collaborative approaches to the solution of real-world problems and opportunities. Third, the creation of organizational and community environments that support these kinds of collaborations and exchanges will require different strategies at different times in an institution’s development.

## **A Scale of Engagement**

Academic institutions and communities are not traditional allies and don’t easily learn to work with each other overnight (Sandy and Holland 2006). Internal and external habits and histories must be overcome and changed; new skills and relationships must be developed; evaluation and experience will advance community engagement to a state of trust and sustainability. Each level or type of engagement requires different institutional environments, different support structures, and different working relationships with the

community beyond the boundaries of the institution, as well as an investment of resources. The practice of engagement has a number of implications for the conduct of research and the promotion of learning. Some forms of engagement have only a limited connection to scholarship while others intensely change the way in which these vital functions of a university are conducted and the impact of these activities on community life and development. For some institutions, all of the following forms of engagement coexist while at other institutions this sequence represents stages in an increasingly complex commitment to engagement as a core expression of institutional purpose and identity. To some degree, the sequence represents one way of summarizing the evolution of engagement in higher education. The progress across the types is often informed and energized by the observation of the mutual benefits for academic goals (learning and research) and for community goals (capacity-building for change and improvement) as well as mutual goals of understanding, cooperation, and quality of life.

### **Volunteerism**

Most tertiary institutions in the United States have created ways to link individual students who are seeking volunteer opportunities with organizations that want volunteer help. These volunteer offices also become ‘observation posts’ that allow an institutional community to learn more about daily life in the region surrounding the institution. The people who staff these offices often become advocates for greater institutional commitment to collaboration with the community and advisors for staff and students who elect to become more engaged in community-based scholarship and learning.

### **Engaged Learning**

As interest in volunteer activities grows, it does not take very long to realize that these experiences can become powerful occasions for learning if students examine their experiences thoughtfully and if their work is connected in meaningful ways to the educational goals that shape the curriculum. This leads to the next phase of engagement, the drawing of real-life experiences into the curriculum and their use in accomplishing clear educational goals. There is considerable evidence that engaged or active learning strategies have a strong appeal for contemporary students.

Several recent projects in the United States have examined models of enhanced learning for millennial students. In 2000 the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) convened a national panel of educators, business people and administrators to examine the future of liberal education. The panel issued a report entitled *Greater Expectations* that called for a fresh approach to liberal education that would produce graduates prepared for life and work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Greater Expectations 2002). The Panel described graduates who are “*intentional* about the process of acquiring learning, *empowered* by the mastery of intellectual and practical skills, *informed* by knowledge from various disciplines and *responsible* for their actions and those of society (Foreword by Andrea Leskes in Huber and Hutchings 2004, p. iv).” Integrated learning requires an environment in which students can bring together their formal studies and their life experiences, explore and understand the worldviews of different fields, learn how to examine a complex issue from multiple perspectives, and bridge the often daunting gaps between theory and practice, contemplation and action. As conceptions of the educated

person began to incorporate the idea of informed, creative, productive and responsible action, a growing movement toward integrated learning evolved.

As the Association of American Colleges and Universities and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching have expressed it in their joint statement on Integrative Learning (Huber and Hutchings 2004, p. 13):

*Integrative learning comes in many varieties: connecting skills and knowledge from multiple sources and experiences; applying theory to practice in various settings utilizing diverse and even contradictory points of view; and, understanding issues and positions contextually.*

This approach can change and strengthen the working relationships of the disciplines within an institution. There also must be a significant change in how campuses interact with the communities around them and with other knowledge-based organizations like K-12, social service agencies, business alliances and other collections of knowledgeable people who depend upon accurate and timely information to do their work. A college or university that can create an environment where this form of integration can occur can be called truly engaged. In such a setting, the historical gaps that limited new working relationships between the professions and the liberal arts, general education and the in-depth study of the major, formal study and daily life, academic affairs and student affairs, research and teaching, academics and community can be closed. In this way, engagement with external communities creates a sense of common purpose and becomes a natural and powerful vehicle for developing a stronger fabric of internal campus community spirit.

Engaged learning can make the creation and application of knowledge both visible and compelling and, at the same time, these experiences can be put to good use as students make the challenging transition from the more intentional and predictable environment of a university to the complex and ever-changing world beyond. As more programs have embraced engaged learning, institutions have been required to examine their intellectual agenda, their models of knowledge generation and transfer, and the support structures that need to be in place to foster links between engaged learning and engaged scholarship. More on this point is provided below.

### **Engaged Scholarship**

For as long as most of us can remember, the intellectual work of the academy has been artificially separated for purposes of evaluating the work of faculty into research, teaching and service. Given the changes affecting knowledge generation and the urgency of connecting knowledge to global issues, it has become increasingly clear that the dissection of the process of observation, discovery, action and reflection into three separate facets of a scholarly life, either for faculty members or for students, is much too restrictive. A milestone conception along the pathway toward an integration of these aspects of scholarship was the work of Ernest Boyer. In 1990, Boyer proposed a grand synthesis in his monograph *Scholarship Reconsidered. Priorities of the Professoriate*. He began by “looking at the way the work of the academy has changed throughout the years - moving from teaching, to service, and then research, reflecting the shifting priorities both within the academy and beyond” (Boyer 1990, p. xi). Examining the changing context within which higher education operates, Boyer concluded that, “At no time in our

history has the need been greater for connecting the work of the academy to the social and environmental challenges beyond the campus” (Boyer 1990, p. xii). He then wrote an entire monograph addressing his core theme: “The most important obligation now confronting the nation’s colleges and universities is to break out of the old tired teaching versus research debate and define, in creative ways, what it means to be a scholar” (Boyer 1990, p. xii).

The result of Boyer’s wonderfully integrative reflection on this challenge was a model of scholarship that could no longer be broken into separate parts. He developed a conception of scholarship as a dynamic mix of different ways in which we routinely work with knowledge: discovery, integration, interpretation, application. By 1996, he reinterpreted application as “engagement.” “The academy must become a more vigorous partner in the search for answers to our most pressing social, civic, economic and moral problems, and must reaffirm its historic commitment to what I call the scholarship of engagement.” In his view the scholarship of engagement “means connecting the rich resources of the university to our most pressing social, civic, and ethic problems, to our children, to our schools, to our teachers, and to our cities. Campuses would be viewed by both students and professors not as isolated islands, but as staging grounds for action” (Boyer, 1996).

This conception of interaction with knowledge as a platform for exploring critical issues of immediate importance argues that anyone – student, academic, staff member, or community member – can be involved in any or all aspects of scholarly work. An engaged approach to scholarship changes the design of the work and the nature of who participates, but not the core expectation of intellectual rigor and quality -- who defines the questions, who does the work, who interprets the results and who puts the results to good use. If the focus is a matter of shared concern, the external community is involved, and the arena of study is community-based, and the results are applied to benefit academia and the public interest; it is engaged scholarship. Boyer set in motion the first line of engagement, that of interaction across realms of knowledge and different ways of ‘knowing’ and using knowledge to benefit society. This way of thinking has grown since his initial contributions and has expanded into more and more aspects of academic and community life.

The next major milestone along the path to a richer conception of engagement in the United States emerged from the work of the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities (Kellogg Commission 1995) which shifted the terms *research*, *teaching* and *service* to the words *discovery*, *learning* and *engagement*. In so doing, the Commission opened up a consideration of who participates in scholarly work, where that work is done, who defines the questions of significance and who cares about the answers obtained and who is responsible for putting the resulting insights and knowledge to effective use in addressing complex, societal problems either in a particular community or on a global scale. This shift in emphasis opened the door for thinking about the ways in which concepts of scholarship apply to the student experience.

Since the work of the Kellogg Commission, some observers have begun to think both about the large domain encompassed by a scholarly agenda and the way in which both research (defined broadly as discovery, integration, interpretation and application) and



teaching (also defined broadly as an approach to the collective enterprise called “the curriculum”) can be approached through networked partnership relationships and thus can become engaged scholarship (Ramaley 2005.)

There are many motivations for considering engaged scholarship as legitimate work for both faculty and students. At one level, it offers a way for scholars as well as students to integrate their scholarly interests and their personal experiences and motivations. As David Cooper expresses it, “Could I bring my ‘whole self’ to a vocation in higher education? Could I practice a scholarship that nourished an active inner life, while forging strong and meaningful links to the public sphere? What would scholarship, teaching and service look like if they supported both personal wholeness and the fulfillments of an engaged public life?” (Cooper 2002, p. 26). For this kind of authenticity to be possible, the entire scholarly and learning environment must expand and open up. This idea leads us to a consideration of engaged institutions which must provide a safe and supportive environment for the scholarship of engagement.

### **Engaged institutions**

Early in its emergence, engagement referred primarily to individual experiences --how students learn and how academics choose the questions they wish to pursue in their research. As engagement spreads from individual experiences to shared experiences within departments and across disciplines, scholarship itself begins to change. The traditional distinctions of teaching, research and service begin to blur and research ceases to be the exclusive purview of a few scholars and their most advanced students. As engagement progresses, the distinctions articulated by Boyer (1990) – discovery, integration, application and the scholarship of teaching -- cease to matter as much. Discovery and application can occur together in what Donald Stokes (1997) calls Pasteur’s Quadrant, where theoretical advances and practical utility combine. The scholarship of teaching blends with discovery, and all forms of scholarship can occur in a complex cycle of innovation that draws upon observation and experience to challenge theory and then applies theory to the understanding of experience (Ramaley et al, 2005). Deepening relationships with community partners, characterized by trust and knowledge exchange, create mutual benefits that strengthen university and community capacity, generating new energy for further collaboration. Universities and colleges are in an especially good position to be the locus of work of this kind and can, by doing so, accomplish their public responsibilities as stewards of public resources and contributors to community development.

As the different forms of scholarly activity come together in an engagement model, we must find a new vocabulary to describe what we are doing. There is no need to retain the term *service* in our lexicon. Now research is often *engaged research*, and teaching and learning are becoming *engaged learning*. More commonly, engaged research takes place as an integration of theory and practice, with utility being one intended outcome and advancement of our fundamental knowledge being the other outcome. Active or hands-on learning can take place in a campus setting or off campus. In either environment, learning has meaningful consequences that can influence the thinking and the lives of others. Recent research shows clearly that this kind of learning fosters deeper, more lasting

insights and promotes greater confidence and competence (summarized in Bransford et al, 1999, and Pascarella & Terenzini 2005).

### **Creating the capacity for engagement**

The engaged institution, which in the United States today takes many forms ranging from state and land-grant universities to regional comprehensive institutions, urban universities, community colleges and liberal arts colleges, is committed to direct interaction with external constituencies and communities through mutually-beneficial exchange, exploration, and application of knowledge, expertise and shared 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 institution is responsive to (and respectful of) community-identified needs, opportunities, and goals in ways that are appropriate to the campus' mission and academic strengths.

Unless the institution's academic staff members and leaders embrace engagement as a key strategic value and as legitimate scholarly work, and then back up those commitments with both moral support and concrete resources, engagement will remain individually defined and sporadic. Limited interventions and occasional programs cannot attract community partnerships or influence larger systems on a scale necessary to create change in communities. Significant change to incorporate a strong community base for research and education requires (1) the possibility of reward or benefit for all participants; (2) individual influence and inspired leadership throughout the institution, not just at the top; (3) an institution that is responsive to the needs of the community it serves; (4) educational planning and purposefulness that recognizes the value of active and responsible community service that has a real community impact; (5) a willingness to adopt a shared agenda and a shared resource base over which the institution has only partial control; and finally, (6) the capacity to change (Ramaley 2006.)

Regardless of local circumstances and institutional traditions and history, there are a few conditions that must be in place for a community-based engagement strategy to work. First, community-based work must be valued as a meaningful educational experience and a legitimate mode of scholarly work. Second, the evaluation of academic staff and student work must include rigorous measures of the quality and impact of community-based scholarship, and engagement or community involvement must be recognized as a component of general or professional staff work as well. Third, engagement and community partnerships require infrastructure that helps academics, students, and community partners identify community-based learning and research opportunities, facilitate partnership relationships, provide logistical and technical support, and assess the results of such programs. Fourth, assessment of benefits and impacts must consider both from the institutional point-of-view and the perspectives of the community. These engagement support structures can often be an expansion of existing offices that address research and teaching to support and encourage engaged forms of these classic activities. Fifth and finally, engagement is complex and skilled work. Tertiary institutions must invest in professional development and orientation activities for academic staff and students to develop the necessary skills to participate in research and curricular programs in a collaborative mode with partners from different academic disciplines and with

significant community involvement. The most advanced cases integrate engagement into academic priorities, strategic plans and institutional policies.

Our two universities are illustrative. Winona State University has both a deep sense of place, located as it is on the banks of the Upper Mississippi River, and a sense of purpose that shape its engagement agenda, learning strategies, research and internal and external relationships. WSU has embraced its mission as a “community of learners improving our world.” The University of Western Sydney also operates on a foundation of a sense of place as exemplified by its motto “Bringing Knowledge to Life.” Our region is Greater Western Sydney, an area of about 1.5 million people from more than 150 nations and the largest indigenous population outside the Northern Territories. Half a world apart, each university chose to focus in part on a few broad engagement themes developed in dialogue with communities. Although WSU and UWS differ in role and mission, as well as size and location, it is interesting that we have independently identified a set of similar concerns driven by global issues that will affect us all-- environmental stewardship and a concern for climate change, a special focus on vulnerable populations including advocacy for children, wellness, economic development, and collaborations to improve the delivery of exemplary health care and educational opportunity and attainment, especially for the historically underrepresented including our own indigenous peoples and new migrant communities. We believe that the identification of core themes for engagement provides a road map for academics, students, and community partners to see their path to partnership and participation in engagement programs, without excluding innovative projects on other topics as they may emerge from dialogue and changing conditions.

### **Three Approaches to Change**

For an academic institution to implement these strategies and develop a capacity for engagement and community partnership requires change to traditional organizational structures, policies, budgets and values. In approaching change in academic organisations (which are notoriously resistant to change) it is useful to think about the different kinds of change and to develop an intentional change management strategy.

To be *smart* in one’s approach to change in higher education requires an understanding of when and how to employ each of three types or approaches to change (Baer, Duin, & Ramaley 2008) (see Table 1). Each of these approaches may be in use simultaneously at different levels of an organization and in response to different needs. Some challenges can be addressed by using well-practiced approaches to familiar problems (*routine change*). Other issues require planned out approaches (*strategic change*). In contrast, complex demands require approaches that are invented “as you go”; these require a significant expansion of core individual and institutional capacities and new ways of working together (*transformative change*).

**Table 1: Three Types and Associated Approaches to Change in Higher Education  
(Modified from Baer, Duin and Ramaley (2008))**

	<b>Routine Change</b>	<b>Strategic Change</b>	<b>Transformative Change</b>
Problem Solving	Applies routine expertise to well defined problems; answers clear questions; works to correct errors; is incremental and is unlikely to spread from an initial focus.	Applies specific expertise to improve productivity or clarity of something through redesign or reengineering; it rewards specific behaviors and is likely to be applied in multiple areas.	Applies adaptive expertise to emerging challenges; seeks solutions when there are no clear answers; results in significant expanding of core capacities; involves working together differently; adds value and sweeps out in all directions.
Planning focus	Linear, paper-intensive, lacking cultural context of organization.	Linear, formalized, employee involvement, reengineering, business transformation, and continuous quality improvement.	Structural changes; transformation of programs, services, practices, and policies; future-oriented, flexible, based on organizational intelligence, and creativity, moving from strategy to transformation.
Change Mechanisms	Conforms with policy; change is built into policies and procedures based on existing structure and operations.	Focuses on quality: examples include Total Quality Management, Key Performance Indicators, and other continuous improvement indicators.	Focuses on cycle of innovation and adaptive change: examples include complete redesign of undergraduate curriculum (goals, philosophy and student experience); portfolios vs. grades; new uses of faculty expertise.
Leadership & Core Competencies	Leadership is solo (classic hierarchy) Core competencies: specific expertise.	Leadership provided by a team (horizontal organization) Core competencies: disciplinary thinking.	Leadership is shared (hologram organization) Core competencies: globalist thinking, synthesizers, adapters, cultural translators, boundary spanners.
Engagement	Individual learning and expertise.	Teams represent different perspectives.	A new shared expertise is created by blending theoretical frameworks and perspectives.
Accountability	Does not require leading indicators. Focuses on standard operating procedures and policies and lagging indicators.	Uses performance scorecards or similar metrics to assess and reward behavior. Focuses on department based measurements.	Uses scorecards but also requires leading indicators and clear measurable outcomes. Focuses on enterprise wide analytics.

Those who understand these three types of change and employ them appropriately are practicing *smart change*. The key concept is that each of the three kinds of change works well in particular circumstances. What makes this approach smart is to know when to use each approach to initiating change, separately or in combination.

*Routine change* is the application of routine expertise to well defined problems. It is discrete, requires specific expertise, and is largely based on specific expertise, often administrative expertise. It applies to clear questions where there are well known and well-researched answers. It corrects errors, is incremental, and the change itself is not likely to spread from the initial focus. Routine change is like a repair patch. As such, routine change does not require leading indicators as it is focused largely on sustaining the *status quo*. In this case, leadership is a solo model (classic hierarchy), and the work is usually self-contained and does not require the assistance of anyone outside a particular unit or area of responsibility.

Unfortunately, routine change can lead to a “blame” culture where people learn to “keep their mouths shut” about difficulties with current policies and procedures. As such, it does not empower people to consider themselves responsible for finding and solving problems because it does not regularly foster honesty and openness. In preparing the way for an engagement agenda, there will probably not be much reason to apply the techniques of routine change, but it is helpful to start with this simpler, more familiar model in order to set up a contrast with the other two kinds of change.

*Strategic change* involves the design and reengineering of a program, a process or a working environment to improve the productivity, clarity, or quality of the activities or outcomes supported by that area or process. It is incremental and is largely interdisciplinary in its focus. Recent examples include improvement initiatives such as Total Quality Management (TQM), Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), Scorecards and other management practices used to develop processes that are stable and predictable and are therefore used to improve quality, productivity and efficiency. Strategic change uses metrics such as performance scorecards to document progress and reward behavior. In this case, the work is led by teams composed of experts from different areas that must work together to redesign the program or process. The change mandate itself is largely mandated from the top (vertical organization), and engagement takes the form of bridging across departments or areas of specialisation (one to one). Strategic change helps to identify problems, but people often do not feel personally responsible; that is, it can lead to a “planned change” culture where people compare their situation to existing data but, unless they are designated as the “change agent”, they are less likely to feel any personal ownership in the enterprise. In cases like this, it is someone else’s problem to identify a problem and to set in motion a reengineering project.

In contrast to routine and strategic change, *transformative change* crosses disciplinary and organisational lines and is therefore systemic. It focusses on the application of adaptive expertise to emerging challenges. Adaptive expertise, unlike routine expertise, is based on the capacity to learn while working on a problem or to “invent as you go.” Some people talk about “building the airplane as you fly it.” All of these ways of describing adaptive expertise capture the creativity and uncertainty of this approach. In traditional

environments, this kind of work can be unsettling and engender strong emotional responses. People who have probably not met before, or at least have not worked together before, are brought together to blend their experiences and knowledge to generate the ideas and knowledge required to find a solution for a problem that many of them have not seen before.

In cases where there are no clear answers and often no agreement even on what problem must be solved, this kind of change effort evolves quickly, requires global or big picture thinking, and is largely trans- or multi-disciplinary focussed. No one is the designated expert and, at the same time, everyone is. It is imperative for finding solutions when there are no clear answers. Working in adaptive or transformational mode can result in significant expanding of core capacities because it demands that people work together differently, usually collaboratively. Examples include the use of portfolios to capture student achievement instead of course grades, the complete redesign of curricula and the formation of new kinds of institutional collaborations and partnerships. In this case, leadership is shared across different levels of an organisation, and engagement is integrative or blurred.

Transformative change results in proactive detection of problems largely because of shared leadership and thus shared accountability. People who have experienced this kind of work often see the world in new ways, pay attention to things that people who have never strayed outside their own comfort zones may miss or simply ignore and design solutions that other people would never consider or imagine. They have a new repertoire of ways to respond to problems. This new capacity results in a “culture of inquiry” where individuals share insights within communities of practice. In this case, anyone can be a change agent; the assignment goes to everyone, and people are empowered to be part of the change process. Once a transformational change dynamic is set up, institutions become self-organising and self-correcting whenever things get out of balance or the equilibrium of the organisation is disturbed by either internal or external changes. Such institutions become equivalent to a social network or open source model in which anyone may offer suggestions, contribute to advancing the institution and feel an integral part of the enterprise as a whole. This capacity is learned by doing. It cannot be mandated from the top of an organisation. Engaged teaching and research partnerships with communities in projects that facilitate exchange of knowledge and cultural approaches can facilitate the development of these transformative activities.

## **A Framework for Planning Change for Engagement**

As outlined above, the implementation of engagement requires organisational change meant to improve and align internal and external capacities for knowledge exchange relationships. A good place to begin is to undertake a review of the extent to which an institution has embraced engagement and the forms that this commitment takes. This framework can be translated into a short set of questions that can guide discussions about the role and purposes of engagement that are in play. In each case, it is helpful to assemble evidence that would be convincing to someone approaching these issues for the first time as well as for more seasoned observers. The exploration of these questions can, in and of itself, be a way to explore internal and external perspectives of the academic

institution's culture, values, priorities, and capacity for effective engagement with communities as an aspect of scholarly work.

1. Are there competing visions or goals for your institution or do you have reasonably shared goals and a common vision?
2. Does your vision and mission embrace engagement? If so, in what ways?
3. How are important decisions made at your institution?
  - a. If there is a strong sense of shared purpose, what contributes to that coherence? If not, what might be done to bring people together to seek common goals and to build shared expectations about what the future should be?
  - b. What decisions are made centrally and what decisions are made locally?
  - c. Is it clear who makes decisions and the basis for those or is decision-making diffuse?
  - d. Who has the most power in your institution?
4. Has a convincing case been made for the importance of engagement?
  - a. Who might fear the introduction or expansion of engagement the most?
  - b. Who stands to gain and who stands to lose if engagement receives a greater emphasis and draws more resources?
5. Do you understand the factors in the institutional culture and history as well as in the external environment that can support or resist the introduction or expansion of engagement?
6. What might you do to create a more receptive climate for engagement?

## Conclusion

The implementation of community engagement is being widely adopted around the world as a way of co-creating knowledge through mutually-beneficial partnership relationships between higher education institutions and communities of all types. The motivation to do so arises from shared interests in addressing local and global issues in ways that enhance community capacity and conditions, increase social capital and participation, and other community benefits while also improving research and learning outcomes for students and staff of universities. This complex work requires new ways of exchanging and exploring knowledge with others. Thus significant changes are needed in academic organisations, cultures and values in order to develop new attitudes, skills and beliefs about the nature of scholarly work and the role of academia in the production of new knowledge. Breaking from past traditions of using communities as laboratories for research and learning, tertiary institutions are changing to collaborate with and acknowledge the essential expertise and wisdom that resides in communities. This requires academics to recognise that they, too, are learners and explorers. To address critical societal concerns, to prepare for the future, to elevate the importance and centrality of our cultures and traditions in a changing world...knowledge work must be shared work that ensures mutual benefit, respect, rewards for all who participate. The last 15+ years of experience with community-university partnerships provide valuable principles and practices that ensure that intellectual exchange relationships will continue to enhance community capacity while also strengthening research and learning outcomes for academia – a fair exchange when done with attention to reciprocity and a shared commitment to a just and healthy society.

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