Topic 6:

Measuring the Impact of Scholarly Work on the Community to Fulfill the Engagement Mission

Concurrent Session Summary

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What is the meaning of engagement as scholarly work?

Variety of answers but generally people felt that:

- What have you contributed to humankind – greater good
- Is your work worthy or replication
- Was the work beneficial to you or your discipline and to others – transferable and understandable to those outside the academy or discipline

What is the meaning of engagement as scholarly work?

Challenges:

- We don't agree on campuses about the term engagement
- General feeling that Engagement should not be separate from teaching research and service – but be part of all three (don't create a separate category for engagement)
- Engagement can be long term partnerships and faculty are rewarded through publications / T & R for new work produced – not studies or work over a period of time.

What is the meaning of engagement as scholarly work?

Challenges (continued):

- Communities are tired of being used for research, etc… relationships need to have reciprocity
- Community rarely has opportunity to evaluate faculty work or institutional work.

How have universities and other institutions sought to determine the value of such efforts (i.e. specific measures)?

Generally people felt:

- How we measure value is still largely under debate
- Community should define the impact
- Value still lies within discipline work, not in institutions
- Recognition is an important tool in promoting the work
- Many campuses are trying to make the transition to determine value in these efforts through various means.

How have universities and other institutions sought to determine the value of such efforts (i.e. specific measures)?

Challenges:

- Universities are decentralized institutions so there is little sharing across disciplines.

- Recognizing community impact, when generally work is recognized from global, national and locally in that order. There are no publications for engagement on campus generally – but there is for teaching, research etc…

How can we measure the impact of the university's work on community well-being? What indicators exist both within and outside the university?

Generally:

- People felt uncomfortable with universities defining community "well being" in the question. And that communities need to define it and/or what does that mean – small picture and big picture issues for community.
- Again trust between campus and community is still an issue. Goals need to be established from both sides and clearly defined.

How can we measure the impact of the university's work on community well-being? What indicators exist both within and outside the university?

Generally (continued):

- Extension is often pointed to as the engagement work and only extension
- Better dialogue needs to be used to insure reciprocity of partnerships and scholarly work – there needs to be more capacity for this work.
- Some try to do this work department to department and others try to do it across campuses.

How can we measure the impact of the university's work on community well-being? What indicators exist both within and outside the university?

Challenges:

- Almost everyone felt that it was easier to evaluate an individual project vs. total campus engagement or contribution to the "Community."
- Community projects are multidisciplinary generally and very hard to access/evaluate
- There is an assumption that only if there is an impact (often economic) that the partnership was valuable and significant

How can we move beyond project evaluations to aggregate data across units and institutions to provide a more comprehensive picture of the university's contributions to the public?

Generally:

- People felt it was impossible, in one case a campus said they had tried for 9 months to accomplish a model for doing this and came to the conclusion that they could not accomplish it. Generic benchmarks.

- People wonder if what we need is good examples and stories that show the impact of this work and how it benefited others.

How can we move beyond project evaluations to aggregate data across units and institutions to provide a more comprehensive picture of the university's contributions to the public?

Also, the PR and accountability comes in to play here – obviously these are pressure points for campuses to talk with others – state legislatures, general public, funders, etc…

Many campuses are trying to gather information and be able to say something cumulatively about engagement, but finding it really hard. People were hoping for good ideas to do this.

How can we move beyond project evaluations to aggregate data across units and institutions to provide a more comprehensive picture of the university's contributions to the public?

Finally, there was a desire to have more community people/partnerships in conversations like the one we were having.