

**UNM Action Plan**  
**Engagement Academy for University Leaders**  
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### **Purpose Statement**

This UNM Community Engagement Action Plan operationalizes key components of the UNM 2020 and Vision 2020 Strategic Plans and sets forth an initial agenda for advancing and supporting UNM's community-engaged activities and public scholarship. The goal of this plan is to operationalize strategies and actions designed to:

- a. promote community capacity building to maximize and grow community assets,
- b. expand and facilitate institutional engagement with our surrounding communities, and
- c. create robust civic engagement and community-based learning opportunities for UNM students, faculty, and staff.

These strategies and actions will be systematically implemented in a way that creates and sustains reciprocal and mutually beneficial local, regional, state, and international partnerships with community through our teaching, research, and service. This Action Plan will inform and actualize our institutional strategy, practices, and culture and infuse community engagement through and with all other major university initiatives in a goal of collective and sustainable impact. It will also bridge our campus to our community and build knowledge and capacity to solve complex societal challenges to fulfill and strengthen our mission as a public flagship institution.

### **Community Engagement in Higher Education**

According to the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, **community engagement** describes *collaboration* between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the *mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources* in a context of *partnership* and *reciprocity*.

The purpose of community engagement is the partnership of college and university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good.

### **Community Engagement as a Strategic Catalyst**

Currently, the University of New Mexico has significant activity and impact in the local, state, and global community; however, the sustainability and support of that is in question because of the decentralized nature of how community engagement is facilitated, rewarded, and conceptualized. Different entities that are community engaged—that is, units that self report having programs and practices that are embedded in and working with community—follow the basic tenets of community engagement as

defined by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. However, this team feels that the overarching value of community engagement at UNM is characterized as disjointed, immeasurable, and de-emphasized across the institutional mission. Our goal is to build a community engagement agenda for UNM that is inclusive, interdisciplinary, and pervasive across the university.

UNM has recently set forth a strategic agenda that includes objectives to make UNM a destination university, prepares students for lifelong success, promotes institutional citizenship, enhance health and health equity in our state, advance discover and innovation, ensure the university's financial strength and integrity, and accelerate economic development. We would like to see that agenda include objectives that clearly state that UNM is also a university that is engaged with community and where community engagement opportunities are made available to students, faculty, and staff can conduct teaching, research, service, and outreach that is deeply embedded in and engaged with local, state, national, and global communities.

Before we can move forward, however, with the question of changes in policy, developing or expanding a central point of contact for community engagement, or dedication of staffing and resources, we must clarify our overarching goals and make clear how community engagement can strengthen and augment our institutional goals.

### **Community Engagement Action Plan**

UNM is already well along the path to realizing the vision presented above because of the many meaningful contributions faculty, students, and staff are making every day. The goal of this team during the 2014-2015 academic year will be to identify manageable opportunities to enhance efforts to increase recognition and impact and coordinate those efforts with schools, colleges, departments, and the UNM 2020 and Vision 2020 Strategic Plans.

#### *Defining Community Engagement*

We feel that engagement must be operationalized as a strategy to accomplish our institutional goals; however, as an institution we do not yet embrace a philosophy or overarching construct of what community engagement is and should be across our university. We must first develop criteria to clarify what community engagement is and recognize what is currently happening and identify campus exemplars.

#### *Advancing Community Engagement in Scholarship, Teaching & Learning*

For the most part, we gauge that students, faculty, staff and community members are unaware of the many ways UNM is engaged with community through their teaching and scholarship. During our data collection process for the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification, we found consistent examples of faculty and students who want to connect with others in their community-based teaching and research, who want to conduct community-based research and teaching but do not have sufficient opportunity to build that practice, and who want connections to community. We also found (albeit anecdotally) that faculty—especially junior faculty—are often dissuaded by their own peers in these efforts because they are undervalued by traditional scholarship expectations.

In order to achieve the transformative institutional change needed to achieve our university's strategic goals, we must open up a conversation about the value of engagement on academic culture, teaching, and scholarship, focusing upon what is currently happening on our campus and connect community engagement to all of our major institutional initiatives. We want to be transformative in implementing these strategic goals and feel that intentional and strategic infusion of community engagement practices

in scholarship, teaching, and learning is the most impactful rationale is for faculty, students, and community.

### *Connecting Campus and Community*

In the past, groups on campus have conducted campus-wide research focused on this question; however, changes in leadership over the past several years have deeply impacted the continuance and actualization of these efforts. We feel that we must revisit this institutional inquiry because the climate and culture of UNM has changed significantly over the past several years. We need to conduct a strategic inquiry into what people think needs to happen within our institution in order to be more engaged in community.

We also need to ensure that community engaged scholarship is supported and encouraged and, more importantly, that it is rigorous and has measurable impact and outcomes (not just picking up trash and not just volunteering at a soup kitchen). We need to change the conversation surrounding the marginalization of what individual people and disparate units on campus are doing and shift the dialogue to conversations about what the institution can do to support and encourage schools, programs, and units to be more embedded in community in their scholarship, teaching, and learning. In short, we must change definitions people have about community engagement.

Our guiding question in developing this inquiry will be:

*How do we institutionalize community engagement at UNM so that it is valued in the system for faculty, students (in both curricular and co-curricular experiences), staff, and community partners?*

### *A Look to the Future*

This team asserts that our institutional viability, on many different levels across many different spectrums, is dependent upon these considerations. To make a meaningful difference, engagement should be infused throughout our institution and be an integral element in shaping its identity. We also must impress that expanding and advancing our engagement agenda is the right thing to do for students, faculty, and community. If we are committed to using our powers for good, we must move beyond the current motivations of student retention and graduation and enforce the idea that increasing and supporting scholarship, learning and teaching that is inclusive of community-based issues and goals. We must do it because it is the right thing to do for our students, for our faculty and staff, and for our local, regional, state, and global communities.

We also must move beyond the discourse that the purpose of higher education is only to gain employment and improve your social status or that scholarly research is done only for the sake of scholarly research rather than an intentional public purpose; rather, we must embrace the civic elements of education purpose our work so that it creates more civically engaged students and, conceivably, a stronger and better society. If we place this argument squarely in the realm of educational reform, we must consider the viability of a college education/degree in the context of its relevance to our students, our institution, and —most importantly—the future strength and viability of our communities.

A look to the future also raises the issue of the impending departure of retiring senior faculty over the next decade and discusses strategies to recruit and retain the next generation of innovative scholars and teachers. If by 2020 we continue to act as we are, faculty will be lost to retirement, more competitive compensation and rewards, and increased opportunities at other universities to conduct

groundbreaking and innovative scholarship. We need to understand the challenge of where we will be in terms of engagement, retention, research, and funding if we continue to maintain our current path. We must leverage our current assets, which means must have an idea of what our assets are and use those assets to sustain our trajectory and achieve the potential to meet our institutional aspirations.

### **Objectives and Goals**

In order to improve our scholarship, teaching, and learning practices, we must understand the limitations of our current approaches to these facets of higher education. Often community engagement is viewed as something “others” do (i.e. what HSC does, or what Community & Regional Planning does, etc.). Current engagement practices are not transformative or translational across the whole campus, creating an environment where community engagement has become siloed in a very intentional way.

This team recommends that to achieve transformative institutional change, our first order of operation is to initiate a dialogue that engages our campus community in seeing the limitations of this current model and the challenges it creates for faculty, students, and community partners who want to engage. As such, we believe our initial course of action should include the following objectives and goals:

- **Objective No. 1:** Coordinate and present a forum for sharing and exploring the current engagement projects occurring on campus. These projects could be focused on co-curricular service, service-learning experiences, faculty or undergraduate/graduate student research, or other examples of individuals and programs that are conducting community-based work.
- **Objective No. 2:** Engage leadership (chairs, deans, executive leadership, senior faculty) in a conversation about how institutionalization of CE can help achieve institutional goals.
- **Objective No. 3:** Engage faculty, staff, students, and community members in structured and purposeful conversations (collecting data from these forums) about what they think our institution should be doing in order to be more constructively engaged in community?

### **Key Partnerships**

For each objective listed above, this team asserts that there are key partnerships and both institutional and individual participation that are essential to the advancement of this agenda. In order to gain a comprehensive picture of community engagement at UNM, in order to engage key leaders in constructive and forward thinking dialogue about how community achievement intersects institutional goals, and in order to engage faculty, students, staff, and community members in a constructive and forward thinking dialogue about what community engagement should encompass at UNM, this agenda proposes the following partnerships:

#### *Key Groups*

1. Targeted focus groups consisting of department chairs and faculty members from each unit on campus should be approached to discuss the definition of community engagement and to gauge activities and interest in community engaged practices.
2. Student focus groups—mobilized through student services, ethnic centers, and graduate and undergraduate student organizations (ASUNM, GPSA, etc.), and high school outreach—should be engaged in discussions about community engagement through curricular and co-curricular partnerships can help them.
3. Community partners should be identified and strategically engaged for the similar discussion—approaching programs, colleges and schools to have them name one or two community partners that we can speak to. These can be business or research partners, community-based organizations (i.e. Healthcare for the Homeless, etc.), or non-government agencies (NGOs).

### *Key Campus Offices*

1. Staff Council, Student Services staff, Human Resources, Career Services, Physical Plant.
2. Government Relations and University Communications and Marketing.
3. UNM Administration: Office of Research and Office of Institutional Analytics.

### *Key Leadership*

1. Virginia Scharff, Associate Provost for Faculty Development and Academic and International Initiatives.
2. Leslie Morrison, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
3. Richard Wood, Special Advisor to the Provost for Strategic Initiatives
4. Tim Gutierrez, Associate Vice President of Student Services
5. Johann Van Reenen, Associate Vice President for Research Initiatives
6. Pamela Pyle, Faculty Senate President
7. Marc Saavedra, Director of Government Relations

### **Next Steps**

The university recently completed its application for the Elective Community Engagement Classification from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. We will be notified in January 2015 as to whether we receive that distinguished classification. Regardless of the outcome, the self-study conducted by the Carnegie steering committee speaks volumes about the breadth and scope of community engagement at UNM—from the isolated service-learning course to long-established outreach programs to major university-community research partnerships, it is clear that UNM is indeed an “engaged institution.” More than 30 units across campus and from branch campuses self-reported community engagement initiatives ranging from course-based practices to major research partnerships. Additionally, the steering committee conducted research to find examples from schools, colleges, and programs that did not self-report, but that were believed to have courses, outreach programs, and partnerships that fit the parameters of the data collection process.

### **Proposed Formation of the Council for Community Engagement (CCE)**

The *UNM Council for Community Engagement* will promote institutional citizenship, engaging people of all identities, and from all backgrounds, cultures, and communities to create and sustain reciprocal and mutually beneficial local, regional, state, and international partnerships through teaching, research, and service. These partnerships will inform our institutional strategy, practices and culture; bridge our campus to our community; and build knowledge and capacity to solve complex societal challenges. Furthermore, the CCE will ensure that the goals and objectives set forth in this plan will be systematically executed and accomplished in order to best leverage the work and intended outcomes.

### **The Purpose of the Council for Community Engagement**

UNM has a large, well-documented portfolio of community-engaged research, teaching, and service that has grown over time as the University has expanded into a diversified research institution strategically located in Central New Mexico. Communities involved are diverse in type, interest and location, from local to global. While community engagement cuts across much of the University, it is more relevant to various academic disciplines than others, and, in some fields, is integral to them. Faculty involvement is a matter of choice—as it should be. Below are four distinct goals for the CCE. These are launching points from which the CCE will develop a strategic plan for community engagement at UNM.

#### *Goal 1: Establishing a Conceptual Framework for Community Engagement*

A working conceptual model of community engagement would be useful for the UNM community to advance future discussion and inform policy decisions. Community engagement has many types:

community-based and applied research; community engaged teaching and learning includes, such as service-learning; and engaged service includes clinical services and service to community groups. As such the *CCE* would:

- Develop and define community engagement at the University of New Mexico, including:
  - Defining service-learning, outreach, and community engaged scholarship;
- Develop a strategic plan and recommendations for community engagement across all campuses;
- Coordinate CE Strategic vision with current planning initiatives.

### *Goal 2: Community Engaged Scholarship & Faculty Rewards & Incentives*

The articulation between scholarship and community engagement requires focused exploration. While members of the Task Force for Community Engaged Scholarship have varied views, the group agreed that further discussion among interested faculty and administrators is important. UNM's community engagement mission can be more fully elaborated and communicated in relation to its core functions of research, teaching, and service if we continue to explore changes in the faculty rewards systems, particularly in expanding tenure and promotion policy to be more inclusive and supportive of community engaged scholarship. As such, the *CCE* would:

- Assess the faculty reward structure at UNM such that engaged research/work could be acknowledged and honored as a possible area of focus and scholarly work, including:
  - Identifying potential tasks and priorities,
  - Meeting with departments and colleges to discuss individual T&P policies and how/whether CES is centralized within the department,
  - Engaging with Faculty Senate, Academic Freedom & Tenure Committee, Research & Creative Works Council, and others to revise and expand tenure and promotion policies to be inclusive of community engaged scholarship,
  - Establishing a Community Engaged Scholars Network at UNM (and other state institutions) that serves faculty, researchers, and teaching staff who are committed to campus-community partnerships, community-based research, service-learning, and other forms of public scholarship and engagement, and
  - Identify and share respected peer-reviewed outlets for community-engaged scholarship, either in disciplines or interdisciplinary outlets.

### *Goal 3: Community-Engaged Learning and Teaching*

The *CCE* will investigate the expansion and support of current curricular and co-curricular engagement programs, including a new strategic plan for expanding service-learning and providing faculty development for enhancing courses with service-learning components. Recommendations might include:

- Establishing a criteria and definitions for service-learning courses,
- Establishing a set of course standards and student learning outcomes (SLOs) for all service-learning and community-based research courses,
- Expand the number and quality of service-learning offerings in all disciplines across campus,
- Establishing a Service-learning Faculty Fellows professional development program in which faculty can design and conduct research on their community based teaching efforts,
- Supporting co-curricular community engagement being done through Student Affairs (Community Engagement Center) by helping establish a community engagement minor of study open to all students and supporting with CEC expand and develop other co-curricular initiatives,

- Devising a mechanism for identifying courses that are service-learning (SL) or community-based research (CBR) classes and recommend them as options for students in the General Education core,
- Assessing SLOs in these courses and in the proposed minor, and
- Establish the State's first Campus Compact<sup>1</sup> office and recruit other New Mexico institutions to become members.

*Goal 4: Support and Advance Inclusive University-Community Partnerships*

The CCE will seek to establish a point of contact on campus whose sole purpose will be to develop reciprocal relationships to identify mutual needs and benefits, set agendas for positive change, implement strategies, and assess results and welcome all community members.

- Identify grant opportunities and work with the Research Office to support service-learning and community engagement at UNM.
- Create a tool to measure university-community impact of service-learning, research, outreach, and partnerships.
- Assess effectiveness in achieving departmental, divisional and institutional goals. Strive to constantly improve standards in curricular co-curricular programs and to increase quantity and quality of student input in academic and student affairs.
- Maintain a knowledge base and build a resource library concerning current national and global trends and developments within areas of responsibility.
- Support CCE's outreach and media efforts including creating a website to promote CCE efforts.
- Work with UNM departments, offices, and programs to promote community engagement.
- Develop policies related to community engaged teaching and projects, including memoranda of understanding, student and community partner orientations, safety assurances, etc.
- Regularly report to University on all initiatives.

**Conclusion**

In such tangible ways, UNM is an integral part of many communities, responding to the needs of citizens today and anticipating the challenges of the future. In the process, through knowledge-building partnerships, the entire UNM community grows in learning, capacity and influence. This dynamic connection with the world around us makes visible to the people and leaders of the State of New Mexico the many contributions of their flagship university. As the only Hispanic-serving, very-high research university in the country, UNM is strategically situated to showcase its work.

As the funding of public higher education declines, even apart from the severe fiscal distress of today, it is more important than ever that UNM tap its record of community-engaged research, teaching, and service as a strategic advantage and communicate its successes boldly and effectively. The good news is that much can be achieved simply through improved internal coordination and communication.

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<sup>1</sup> *Campus Compact is a national coalition of more than 1,100 college and university presidents — representing some 6 million students — who are committed to fulfilling the civic purposes of higher education. As the only national higher education association dedicated solely to campus-based civic engagement, Campus Compact promotes public and community service that develops students' citizenship skills, helps campuses forge effective community partnerships, and provides resources and training for faculty seeking to integrate civic and community-based learning into the curriculum. New Mexico does not yet have a Campus Compact, which would link all of the institutions in the state.*