Assessing the Culture of Engagement on a University Campus

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Abstract

This article describes one team's efforts to assess the culture of engagement at Virginia Tech. The team utilized a two-pronged approach to analyze the current culture of engagement on campus. This included focus groups with faculty, administrators, and graduate students in two colleges at the university to address pedagogy, implications, and practical issues related to engagement. Analysis of college strategic plans was also completed to assess language related to engagement and engaged scholarship. We found why faculty, administrators, and students conduct engagement work and the challenges and opportunities of doing so. We also discovered what criteria these individuals use to determine quality engagement, what they believe engagement on campus should look like, and the products derived from engagement work. This article describes our team's efforts and documents the lessons learned to inform similar efforts on other campuses.

Introduction

Enhancing the engagement culture on a university campus is a multifaceted effort. These efforts range from a one way outreach from the university to the community, to continuing education offerings, to applied pedagogy, to community-based research.

Despite the incorporation of the term "engagement" into strategic plans, mission statements, and organizational structures, outreach and engagement activities are often not fully institutionalized or as highly regarded as other missions of the university. As a result, how to more fully incorporate engagement into the academic cultures of our universities has become a national discussion. These discussions are especially salient for land-grant universities, for which engagement is a stated mission. These institutions continue to work to institutionalize and enhance engagement on their campuses.

A key component of catalyzing cultural change is assessing the current culture of an institution to inform an appropriate change strategy. This project as part of that work examined what Virginia Tech faculty, graduate students, and administrators perceive as the engagement culture on campus. The team conducted eight focus groups with faculty, graduate students, and administrators in two colleges at the university–the College of Natural Resources and Environment (CNRE) and the College of Architecture and Urban Studies (CAUS)–with the intent of further refining the definition of engaged scholarship, identifying barriers to engagement, enhancing opportunities for engagement, and creating internal and external opportunities for engagement collaboration. Engagement terminology and intent was also analyzed in campus strategic plans to assess the culture of engagement at Virginia Tech.

The Literature that Guided Us

O'Meara, Saltmarsh, and Sandmann (2008) frame the paths institutions take in strengthening the culture of engagement in their institutions. Holland (2005a, 2005b) described the steps on the path as levels of institutional commitment to community engagement and provided a framework for assessing commitment and culture change. Institutions with high commitment to community engagement view engagement as a central and defining characteristic, making it visible in mission statements, strategic plans, leadership rhetoric, organizational structures, curricula, promotion and tenure practices, hiring guidelines, external communications, and capital campaigns. This commitment is fully integrated into the fabric of the institution. Evidence of its integration is measurable as shown by the Penn State UNISCOPE project (Hyman et al., 2001-2002).

Ryan (1998) identified the competencies required of both leaders and institutions committed to a culture of engagement. Kezar, Chambers, and Burkhardt (2005) outlined the institutional change process in the academy, describing the institutionalization of engagement in terms of a national movement within higher education and as a process of culture change on campuses. Kezar cites key methods for facilitating organizational change that are evidence-based and measurable. Sandmann (2008) conceptualizes both the pathway of institutionalization and

the role university leaders play in shaping and transforming the culture of engagement.

The change process requires institutions and institutional leaders to intentionally build a culture of engagement, including building an infrastructure to support the development and delivery of programs that provide measurable and sustainable results. Fostering leadership commitment requires the president and provost to develop a network of leaders across institutions that are able to articulate the vision, mission, and strategy of engagement and engaged scholarship (Childers et al., 2002). Creating and fostering a network of leaders with these competencies for engagement becomes a major mechanism of organizational change. A key role of administrators in supporting culture change is to make engagement visible in rhetoric and in demonstrated results, such as rewarding faculty, celebrating engaged scholarship, providing internal funding for engaged scholars, and aligning vision and practice (Driscoll & Sandmann, 2004). Driscoll and Sandmann (2004) clearly define a methodology that institutions can use to prepare the ground for assessing institutional culture and for providing administrative leadership to support engaged scholarship. Their work informed this study by providing a framework for assessing the culture, developing the focus group questions, and for shaping the analysis and recommendations. Their findings related to 1) assessing and achieving "institutional fit" for engagement, 2) setting an inquiry-based agenda for assessment, 3) identifying connections between engaged faculty, 4) supporting engaged faculty, and 5) exploring criteria for assessing and evaluating engaged scholarship and informed our study and serve as an excellent starting point for other institutions assessing institutional culture and readiness for institutional change. In particular, their findings indicate that the critical element of this assessment is determining the expectations that faculty and administrators have for engaged scholarship. Seeking the answer to this question became the cornerstone of our study.

Ramaley (2002, 2005, 2011) described how higher education institutions achieve transformational change and become learning organizations. In 2011, at the Virginia Tech program the Engagement Academy for University Leaders. Ramaley provided a framework and described processes of routine institutional change, adoption of innovation or strategic change, and transformative change and how engagement is viewed by institutional leaders during these change processes. Ramaley highlighted measurable steps that promote deep change and influences of the adoption process. Her framework facilitates the study of the institutionalization process and its impact on students, faculty, and the institution itself.

Any adoption of innovation within a university causes shifts in the organization's culture. Universities that have adopted engagement, that is embedded the values and principles of engagement into the mission statement, strategic plan, faculty roles, and reward policies, and operating practices of the institution will have undergone organization and culture change. The scholars of engagement have studied organizational change in higher education and noted that the movement toward institutionalization of engagement in the organization's culture is not a short or easy path and that some institutions may not succeed on their initial attempts at culture change (Holland, 2005b; Levine, 1980; Sandmann & Weerts, 2008). While the scholarship of engagement has yet to be fully embraced widely across institutions or disciplines, an increasing number of early-adopting institutions are moving down the path of culture change. Sandmann and Weerts (2008) have developed a framework of analysis of organizational culture that can explain why some institutions embrace engagement and why some institutions struggle with the change process. A key component of the ease of adoption is related to the change strategy used to introduce change. The first step in developing an appropriate change strategy is assessing the current culture of the institution. There are a number of strategies that can be employed during the assessment process.

Goals and Methods

To assess the culture of engagement at Virginia Tech, the research team strove to:

- Reveal actual practice at the university
- Refine the definition of engaged scholarship
- Include all types of faculty/staff, diverse colleges, and administrative units
- Identify barriers
- Enhance opportunities

To meet these goals, a mix of research methods was utilized. First, eight focus groups were conducted with 62 faculty, graduate students, and administrators in two colleges (see Table 1). The College of Natural Resources and Environment

Table 1. Project Focus Group Participation Summary

College* (n = 2)	Group (n = 8)	Number of Participants (n = 62)
CAUS, CNRE	Graduate Students	5
CAUS, CNRE	Graduate Students	6
CNRE	Faculty	6
CNRE	Faculty	10
CAUS	Faculty	9
CAUS	Faculty	13
CNRE	Administration	7
CAUS	Administration	6

*CAUS (College of Architecture and Urban Studies), CNRE (College of Natural Resources)

(CNRE) and College of Architecture and Urban Studies (CAUS) were chosen for two reasons: a) their disciplinary traditions as applied colleges with strong outreach and engagement activities and b) members of the research team worked within these colleges and therefore had access to key administrators and faculty in each college. Internal Review Board (IRB) human subjects approval was secured in order to undertake this research. The focus group protocol was then piloted with select graduate students before full implementation. Second, strategic plans from all Virginia Tech colleges were also attained and analyzed for attention to engagement using Holland's matrix (1997).

This section explains the rationale and procedures for conducting focus groups and document analysis in this study.

Focus Groups

Focus groups bring together a group of people to discuss a particular topic or range of issues. Focus groups are designed to determine the perceptions, feelings, and thinking of participants about issues, products, services, or opportunities. In addition, focus groups are regularly used to provide insight on organizational issues (Krueger & Casey, 2009), and are commonly found in organizational research (Schwandt, 2007).

As outlined by Stewart, Shamdasani, and Rook (2007), there are several signature aspects of focus groups useful to this study. First, focus groups allow the gathering of qualitative data from individuals who have experienced a particular concrete situation that serves as the focus of investigation. In this case, the situation was engagement at Virginia Tech. Second, focus groups aim to better understand the group dynamics that affect individuals' perceptions, information processing, and decision-making. As described by Patton (2002), through the interaction of key actors in focus groups, data quality is enhanced as "participants tend to provide checks and balances on each other" (p. 386). Additionally, in a group setting participants stimulate each other's responses, often leading to an exchange of ideas that might not occur through one-on-one interviews (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Capturing these dynamics is important when exploring the colleges in which faculty work. Third, a main belief behind focus groups is that live encounters with groups of people will yield incremental answers to behavioral questions that go beyond the level of surface explanations, thereby revealing deep insights (Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook, 2007). As such, the group involvement of focus groups often elicits emotions, associations, and motivations not revealed in individual interviews.

In addition to these aspects, there are several additional advantages to utilizing focus groups. Focus groups serve as an efficient source of data collection, as the researcher learns the perspectives of numerous individuals within the span of approximately one hour (Patton, 2002). In addition, the open response format of focus groups provides an opportunity to obtain large amounts of rich data in the respondents' own words (Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook, 2007). Finally, focus groups are enjoyable for participants, (Patton, 2002), which encourages sharing of perspectives. Because discussions are relaxed, participants often enjoy sharing their ideas and perspectives (Krueger & Casey, 2009).

Despite these advantages, there are some

limitations to focus groups. Participants may not share complete or genuine perspectives due to political concerns or group think (Cresswell, 2005; Patton 2002). Group think is a phenomenon in which individuals may conceal or confuse their personal perspectives to appear in alignment with group trends and priorities (Carey & Smith, 1994, Fontana & Frey, 1994). In other words, the concern that others in the group may disagree with their perspectives or that their answer could reflect negatively on them could cause participants to suppress or invent an answer (Krueger & Casey, 2009). To compensate for these potential weaknesses, focus groups in this study were completed with multiple groups within each college. Two focus group sessions with faculty and one focus group with administrators allowed comparison of responses within each college. In addition, a second data collection method–document analysis of strategic plans–was utilized in this study to provide triangulation of data with focus groups and field notes.

Focus Group Procedures

Focus group participants for each of the two colleges and three groups from within each college (faculty, administrators, and students) were chosen through convenience sampling (i.e. potential participants were selected from those who were close at hand). The CNRE and CAUS associate deans created a list of faculty involved with engagement work and invited them to attend the focus groups. Sixteen faculty members participated in the two CNRE focus groups and 22 faculty members participated in the two CAUS focus groups. For the administrators' focus group, all administrators were invited to attend by their dean or an associate dean. Seven administrators from CNRE and six from CAUS participated in the focus groups.

For the graduate student focus groups, an invitation to participate in the research project was sent twice through the graduate school's announcement listserv, which reaches all graduate students enrolled on or off campus. A total of six students participated. Although college affiliations were not targeted for graduate student participants, those students who responded and participated were all enrolled in CNRE and CAUS, respectively. The five graduate students participating in the focus group pilot also granted permission to use their comments for this project.

Although focus groups allow flexibility in the content and sequence of questions asked, it was important to maintain consistency of procedures across all the focus groups. First, in cases in which consent forms had not yet been signed and received, they were presented, read, and signed before the focus group officially began. Second, as recommended by Merriam (1998) and Patton (2002), the facilitator took minimal notes during the focus groups to maximize listening and eye contact. To capture ideas and comments, between two and five note takers were present at each focus group. Third, each focus group ended by inviting participants to share other information related to the topics discussed and inquiring if participants had any further questions about the study. By opening the door for additional insights and addressing participants' concerns, the researchers sought to maximize the benefits of the focus groups.

Following the recommendations of numerous qualitative research experts, conversations of all focus groups were audio taped (Merriam,1998; Patton, 2002; Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook, 2007). Audio taping was useful to provide a complete record of the discussions and a reference for voice inflections and other nuances not captured by note takers during or after the focus group sessions.

Document Review

Collection of documentation was an important part of this project. Although documents may include a wide range of materials (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1995; Patton, 2002), in this case the documents reviewed included strategic plans from seven Virginia Tech colleges and the Graduate School.

Analysis of the strategic plans served important purposes for this study. First, documents provide exact information (Yin, 2003). Since organizational processes in higher education institutions tend to have a paper trail that can be mined for empirical research (Patton, 2002), documents enable the researcher to not only confirm, but provide complete details on evidence presented in interviews and focus groups (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003; Creswell, 2005). Second, documentation is an unobtrusive way to obtain and assess data (Yin, 2003). Lastly, documents enable the researcher to make inferences about the culture of engagement at the institution, to be explored during focus groups (Yin, 2003). Information in documents also provided context and confirmation for data collected from focus groups. For example, by observing the strategic plans of the two colleges studied, the researchers

Table 2. Methods Used to Improve Credibility, Trustworthiness, and Transferability

Credibility: Readers know results are consistent with data collected (internal validity)	Trustworthiness: Readers know findings can be trusted (external validity)	Transferability: Readers know findings relate to others' experiences (reliability)
- prolonged engagement in the field - research team and note taker debriefing and examination - constant comparative method of data analysis - analytic induction - discussion of researcher bias	- constant comparative method of data analysis - analytic induction - discussion of researcher bias - thick description developed of engagement experience	- discussing unique cases and the possible resultant effects on the data - utilizing a research team and note takers of those being studied to guide research design, participant recruitment, data collection, data analysis, and findings dissemination - discussion of researcher bias

could observe the frequency and levels of engagement communicated by each college, thereby confirming comments made during focus groups.

Document Collection Procedures

The documents utilized in this study were strategic plans from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, College of Architecture and Urban Studies, College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences, College of Business, College of Natural Resources and Environment, College of Engineering, the College of Science, and the Graduate School. To collect these documents, the researchers first searched the websites for each of the eight units to locate plans posted online. In cases where plans were not available online, the dean of each unit, through his or her assistant, was contacted and asked to provide the strategic plan for their college by email. These plans provided documentation of college-wide work, including priorities, objectives, and strategies.

One challenge in the document collection process involved revisions to the strategic plans. Some colleges were updating their plans at the time of this study. Therefore, a few strategic plans were more current than others, depending on the college revision processes.

Data Analysis

Focus group data were analyzed by hand, noting common themes within and across groups. Researchers coded lines in the notes to identify emerging themes. Quotes from the notes were then arranged around each theme. After the coding process was conducted by individuals, the team as a group compared and contrasted interpretations of the themes and patterns. This practice moved back and forth between inductive and deductive processes across focus groups. These procedures follow the case analysis processes suggested by Eisenhardt (1989) and grounded and pattern theory approaches to data analysis (Cresswell, 1998; Strauss, 1987).

Several steps were taken to enhance the credibility, trustworthiness, and transferability of the data (Koch, 2006; Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Rogers & Cowles, 1993). Table 2 describes these actions in detail.

Strategic plans were plotted on the engagement matrix (Holland, 1997) and compared with focus group findings. Key word comparison was used to plot the plans on the matrix.

Findings

At Virginia Tech, specific factors are perceived by faculty, graduate students, and administration as leading to successful engagement. Findings are summarized in Figure 1. Most often discussed about the engagement culture was the role of promotion and tenure for measuring the impact of engagement for faculty. A variety of results from successful engagement were also identified. Specific findings are detailed below.

What is engagement? Three predominant perspectives on engagement were expressed in the focus groups. Engagement was defined as: a) one way outreach from the university, often continuing education offerings (it is interesting to note that this definition is not consistent with the definition and principles of engagement and is evidence of a lack of a shared definition of engagement), b) student learning through service-learning and other forms of applied pedagogy, and

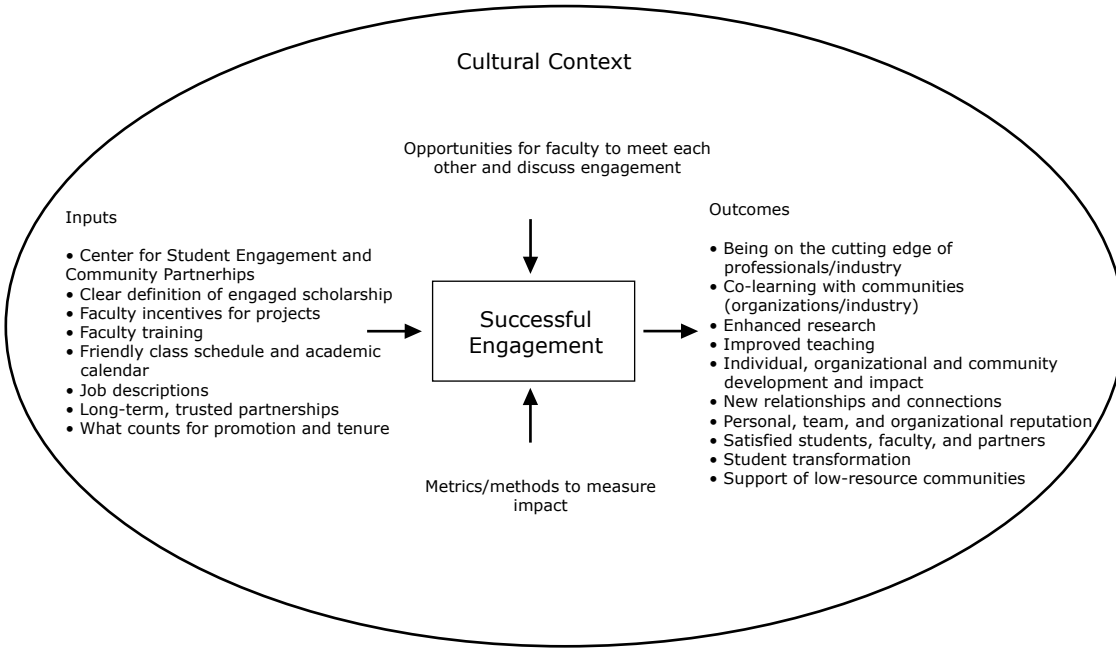

Figure 1. Campus Engagement Model

c) human satisfaction through problem solving, development of reciprocal relationships, trust building, contributing to the common good, and increased reputation and self-esteem. Some faculty saw engagement as a natural part of the research process.

Why do faculty, administrators, and graduate students conduct engagement work? The main reason these individuals engaged with communities was for the intrinsic value of the experience. They also believed engagement helped them keep in touch with industry and professions to be aware of trends, issues, and opportunities for student career development. Finally, they believed engagement improved their teaching and research efforts. One faculty member said, "The community has more to give me than I've had to give them."

What are the challenges to conducting engagement work? The most voiced challenge in conducting engagement work was faculty recognition. All participants felt the promotion and tenure system and administrators do not fully value engagement or that engagement "doesn't count." Other commonly voiced challenges to engagement were the time needed to develop partnerships and other engagement logistics, funding for engagement activities, and the differences between academic and community cultures. One long-time faculty member said, "Everyone who I have seen try [to get promotion with engagement work] has failed." Another said, "The university has a fundamental structure and culture that runs counter to engagement."

What are the opportunities created by engagement work? The most common benefit of engagement was the enhanced reputation of students, faculty, and the university. Participants also said engagement can lead to better teaching and research, funding for projects, valuable connections with those outside the university, and career development for students. As mentioned by one faculty member, "They [students] are really excited to work with actual people on actual projects."

Who does engagement? Most focus group participants believed engagement is the responsibility of everyone on campus due to the land-grant mission and the university's motto, "That I may serve." Campus centers and groups were specifically mentioned that focus on engagement. There was a strong feeling that people who conduct engagement work are those with a passion for it. Some faculty and administrators believed this work is best carried out by those with tenure.

Where does engagement take place? Faculty and students engage with a wide variety of audiences in many venues from local to international. Some faculty feel the campus climate values and supports international engagement work more fully than local engagement. One faculty member said about her local work, "If Appalachia was another country, [my engagement work] would be highly valued."

What criteria determine quality engagement? Participants most often felt the hallmarks of quality engagement were ongoing, reciprocal relationships with community partners, the ability to evaluate and share the impacts of engagement, and serving a need or solving problems. Other criteria for quality engagement included feedback from partners, ownership by the community of the project, co-learning between partners, scholarship, pedagogical impact, personal development, and being meaningful for all involved. One faculty member summed up the criteria of quality engagement as, "Serves a need, solves a problem, addresses real world issues, is targeted, relevant, and has duration."

What should engagement look like? Overall, participants want engagement to be more fully supported and valued. Suggested methods for how this might be achieved included improved integration of engagement in the promotion and tenure process and increased support for engagement through the words and actions of administrators. Specific recommendations included increased funding to support engagement work, the provision of release time, sabbatical, and graduate assistant positions, mentoring and training for faculty, logistical assistance for engagement projects, and networking opportunities with other faculty. They also requested changes in the academic culture to more fully address community needs since academic and community needs often differ and this can stall action. Other suggestions to enhance engagement were expanding the university's engagement strategic plan focus, work load balance with other missions, and to make engagement voluntary for faculty. One faculty member said he needs "a system where we're not swimming upstream." Overall, faculty want more support for engagement activities but not in exchange for increased bureaucracy.

What are the products of engagement work? A variety of engagement products were mentioned by participants. The general categories were scholarship, physical artifacts (i.e. plans and designs), successful long term partnerships, student development, faculty development, project development, enhanced personal and institutional reputation, and enhanced teaching and research. One senior faculty member said, "I'm asking better research and scholarly questions due to engagement. [My work is] more relevant and more powerful."

What are the similarities and differences on perceptions of engagement between focus groups? Overall, the CNRE focus groups centered more fully on research and engagement while the CAUS groups focused more on teaching. The CNRE faculty described the natural complementarity of discovery and engagement while the CAUS faculty described teaching and engagement as fully integrated. There were no notable differences between faculty and administrators within the two colleges on these topics. This difference in perception may be due to the nature of norms of the disciplines in these two colleges (Diamond & Adam, 1995).

Faculty believed engagement improves teaching and research. They were worried about measuring engagement and the mixed messages they get from administration on the value of engagement. For example, they found the recommendation to convert engagement into publications as a sign that administration does not understand what engagement is or the time it takes to conduct it. Finally, faculty believed engagement is critical for transformation of student perceptions and practices.

Students saw engagement as real life application of academic work. They believed faculty need more training in how to engage with communities. They believe the term "service" has baggage in communities. Students also believed one goal of engagement work was to tell the untold or underrepresented stories about communities. Overall, students were more focused on the personal benefit of expanded learning as a result of engagement rather than how engagement could fit into teaching or research.

What do college strategic plans say about engagement? We assessed the level of engagement and engaged scholarship in college strategic plans using the Holland Matrix (1997). It was often difficult to find language pertaining to the concept of engagement and engaged scholarship in the plans. However, no one college strategic plan ranked consistently high or low for support of engagement. The majority of college mission statements did not reflect engagement but the plans showed strong integration of engagement into external communications and fundraising with stakeholders. According to the plans, institutional leadership and the organizational structure supported engagement, but all colleges ranked low for supporting engagement through promotion, tenure, and hiring. This was consistent with the findings of the focus group discussions. There were a variety of degrees to which colleges described the integration of engagement into student involvement and curriculum. All but two colleges described integrating engagement into faculty involvement with community-based

research and learning. Almost all of the college strategic plans indicated support for community involvement through partnerships with communities.

Other thoughts about engagement from the focus groups. Participants offered a variety of suggestions for improving the engagement culture at Virginia Tech. These included sharing engagement models from other universities, encouraging a bottom-up approach to culture change, providing more opportunities for faculty to meet and learn from each other about engagement, provide more incentives for faculty to engage, and recognition that engagement is not always consistent with the university as an economic enterprise. They also suggested that engagement needs to be more clearly defined internally. As described by participants, the community members that faculty and students work with are not concerned with the scholarship of engagement–how engagement work is termed or defined by the academy–as long as they get help with problems and issues.

Lessons Learned

What seemed like a relatively straight forward plan to determine what faculty, administrators, and graduate students in two colleges at Virginia Tech believe about engagement instead became a study of a very complex concept. We hope these lessons below help other institutions with engagement work.

Building on the University's History and Vision. Virginia Tech has a long history of engagement due to its land-grant status, motto, and long held values of public service. This history positioned the institution well to more fully integrate engagement into the university's culture that resulted in receiving a Carnegie Engagement Classification, being awarded the C. Peter Magrath/W.K. Kellogg Foundation Engagement Award, and creating a campus Center for Student Engagement and Community Partnerships. These actions converged as a critical tipping point in institutionalizing engagement at Virginia Tech. Assessing the culture of engagement on any campus is context-specific. Other universities undertaking a similar assessment should design assessment tools with their specific history, context, vision and mission in mind.

The Need for Recognition and Rewards. The major theme that surfaced from all groups was that engagement does not count as much at Virginia Tech as it should and that more support is needed to carry out strong engagement. When you unpack the issues embedded toward this sentiment from an organizational perspective, there is evidence that the institution does not have a unified view of scholarship or a unified typology for publicly engaged scholarship. There may also be a lack of a shared understanding of how to appropriately document this scholarship for accurate assessment and evaluation of the scholarship within the department, college, or institution. This finding is consistent with the literature on engagement (Doberneck, Glass, & Schweitzer, 2010; Finkelstein, 2001; Nicotera, Cutforth, Fretz, & Summers-Thompson, 2011). However, in spite of this perception, everyone we interviewed highly valued engagement both personally and professionally for students, communities, faculty, and the university. Focus group participants were highly motivated by the intrinsic value of their engagement activities even though they perceived an absence of extrinsic rewards such as promotion and tenure.

We discovered that words count. Faculty, administrators, and students want to know how the university defines engagement and why it should be conducted. It is also clear that incentives count. Everyone felt the engagement culture at Virginia Tech could be enhanced by providing a variety of ways to recognize and reward quality engagement. A joint effort by university administrators and faculty to tenure and promotion guidelines could improve recognition of these activities. At Virginia Tech, the Committee for Outreach and International Affairs could serve as a catalyst for this process. At other institutions committees should begin the process of reviewing reward mechanisms for engagement work in collaboration with those faculty members who are heavily engaged. One example of this process is the Penn State UNISCOPE effort (Hyman et al., 2001-2002).

Faculty, students, and administrators believe engagement is more than service-learning. They asked that a wide portfolio of engagement topics and activities be recognized and valued by the university. These appear to be important levers for catalyzing cultural change in disciplines, departments, and colleges.

Incorporating Student and Faculty Paradigms. The difference in perspectives between graduate students and faculty should be noted. Passion for engagement expressed by students is based on giving back to communities and helping unheard voices be heard. On the other hand, faculty and administrators focus on the academic benefits

of the engagement process such as improved teaching and research. A productive engagement culture would ideally incorporate both of these perspectives–both the personal, intrinsic value of engagement work as well as the scholarship of engagement. Future research to assess university culture would benefit by including the perspectives of graduate students, many of whom will become future faculty members and will thereby shape engagement activities on their own campuses.

Integrating Teaching, Research, and Engagement. Faculty and students often articulated the tensions between academic and community work. To address many of these tensions they integrated core elements of their academic work with their community engagement. For example, faculty indicated their work with communities improved their research questions and helped them generate increased revenue through grants and contracts. They also stated that students more deeply understood how theory works by applying it to community-based projects. Graduate students intentionally integrated their community engagement into course assignments and research projects. It is clear that faculty and students who successfully engage with communities as academics focus on integration rather than separation of academic and community work.

Connecting Engaged Faculty Members. The design of our study to include focus groups as a methodology was an intentional effort to connect faculty members who are conducting engagement work. We also started each focus group with participants providing case studies of engagement work. This helped set the stage for those who are cautious about engagement to get a better sense of what those faculty actively involved in engagement work were doing. Indeed, a theme that emerged in the focus groups with faculty members was that they wished for more opportunities to connect and network with other faculty members across the university who are also conducting engagement work. As individual interviews would not have allowed for these connections and conversations to occur, focus groups were a highly successful method to enhance personal connections.

Expanding the Definition of Engagement

We discovered in our focus group conversations and in follow-up discussions with engagement groups on campus that some people are trying to expand what counts as engaged scholarship while others are trying to make engaged scholarship fit the traditional revenue generation and research publication lens. Participants in this project felt the traditional scholarship lens does not recognize the intrinsic value of engagement, the time and effort required to conduct engaged work, the value of locally and regionally disseminated knowledge, and the lack of refereed publication venues. These different approaches to defining and shaping engagement as a part of scholarship illustrate that future assessments of campus culture would benefit from discussions with faculty, administrators and students about how they themselves define engagement and how it is defined in their disciplines or at other institutions.

Shaping Culture as an Act of Scholarship

The research team's project design aimed to contribute to the scholarship of engagement. We designed the project to provide scholarly products about engagement. We gained Institutional Review Board approval for the project and made participants fully aware of our intent to share what was learned about engagement in scholarly ways. We chose to involve a variety of partners using action research methods to help determine the best next steps to enhance the engagement culture based on our findings.

Providing Tools and Resources

We discovered that strategic planning documents at Virginia Tech take on a variety of forms and use a variety of lenses in their development. A next step to more fully communicate engagement and engaged scholarship intentions through strategic plans could include 1) using consistent engagement language in all strategic plans across the university, 2) making administrators, those who create strategic communication plans, and those faculty participating in the strategic planning process more aware of the distinctions outlined in the Holland Matrix, 3) addressing the lack of information on the relationship of engagement to promotion, tenure, and hiring on campus, and 4) aligning the strategic intention and rhetoric. In many cases, institutions have aligned promotion and tenure policies with the strategic intent to elevate engagement but there is a lack of awareness of the policy changes, a lack of a unified view of scholarship, and/or a lack of consistency in the messages in strategic communications across the institution.

A theme that emerged in the focus groups was that many faculty were unsure how to go about measuring engagement. It appears that models of a wide range of engaged scholarship products or artifacts and specific efforts to help measure engagement that leads to those products could

be the most important lever for changing the engagement culture on campus.

All of the focus group participants felt there was a wide variety of resources available to help them with their engagement agenda. However, they didn't know much about these resources. The project team suggested developing an online engagement toolbox for faculty, students, and engagement partners to address this need and to help unify the engagement entities on campus. We found it is critical to have a clear vision for who owns and maintains the website to ensure long term benefit for users.

Learning about Culture Change

Culture change is a slow process and must involve a broad cross-section of the university to be successful. It is very much an evolutionary act rather than a revolutionary one. Clear definitions of new terms, a wide range of engagement models, and engagement champions appear to be critical elements for culture change. We found change processes work best when they are inclusive, not exclusive. In fact, we hope our work will stimulate conversations with campus staff and engagement partners to determine how their perspectives are similar and different about the engagement culture for a more holistic and successful engagement effort.

Limitations of the Study

This qualitative study focused on the engagement experiences at one university and may not reflect the engagement culture or context at other institutions. The two colleges selected for inclusion in the focus groups were chosen based on the visibility of their outreach activities and a historical tradition of engagement at this particular university and may not reflect all disciplines and units at the university. The faculty and administration in this study were invited to participate by administrators so may have felt obligated to participate. Staff were not included in the study since we were specifically interested in the faculty engagement experience and their perspectives of the administrators who guide them and the students they work with. A needed expansion of this research would include the perspectives of staff involved with engagement activities. Also, there was minimal student participation. In spite of these limitations, we believe all institutions, academic units, and disciplines working to enhance community engagement will find helpful suggestions and affirmations in our findings and lessons learned.

Conclusions

Despite strategic emphasis on engagement, for a strong university-wide engagement agenda to be sustained as an integral part of the daily life of the university, faculty members need to see benefit to their own professional development as well as benefits to students, the university, and the community. With increasing pressure for faculty members to demonstrate excellence in research, scholarship, or creative activities, faculty members' engagement efforts need to be recognized and valued by the principal advancement structures of the university, the promotion and tenure process, and other relevant reward structures. Traditionally, outreach and engagement activities have not been as highly regarded as other missions of the university. Ultimately, those faculty involved in engagement work must voice their perceptions of the value of engagement work. To generate broad support for engagement among the faculty as a whole. Engagement activities must be viewed as equal with other missions in the evaluation of faculty.

Culture change is never easy for large organizations. However, change can often be catalyzed by listening to the voices of those closest to the points of change and taking action accordingly. This project discovered, through the voices of faculty, administrators, and graduate students, that engagement is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon that requires a holistic and intentional change strategy at many levels. The passion for engagement work at many institutions is clear. However, the academic context often runs counter to the engagement culture. Universities need to find mechanisms that bridge these gaps to enhance engagement.

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