



Assessing Engagement and Outreach: Lessons Learned

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Engagement Scholarship Consortium
14th Annual Conference
October 9, 2013

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Defining Outreach and Engagement

- During the early 1990's, a Provost-appointed faculty committee defined outreach for Michigan State University.
- Outreach and Engaged Scholarship was defined as: “a form of scholarship that cuts across teaching, research [and creative activities], and service. It involves generating, transmitting, applying, and preserving knowledge for the direct benefit of external audiences in ways that are consistent with university and unit missions.”
- The committee also recommended establishment of a system for measuring, monitoring, and evaluating outreach and engagement, with sufficient standardization to permit aggregation at the unit, college, and University levels, and also sufficient flexibility to accommodate important differences across disciplines, professions, and units.

Instrumentation

- Incremental efforts were attempted first.
 - Several existing university reporting forms were reviewed and revised (e.g., those collecting data about faculty effort, professional accomplishments, contract and grant proposals).
 - New narrowly-focused reporting instruments were created (e.g., on noncredit and off campus credit instruction).
- In 1996, another faculty committee published *Points of Distinction: A Guidebook for Planning and Evaluating Quality Outreach* , building attention for assessing engaged scholarship. It argues that quality be assessed across four dimensions:
 - Significance
 - Context
 - Scholarship
 - Impact

Instrumentation (continued)

- Incremental efforts failed to provide adequate data, so MSU began developing a comprehensive university-wide data collection instrument
 - Grounded in evolving thinking about the assessment of outreach and engagement
 - Iterative development process drew on findings from pilot tests with departments from different colleges, a whole college, faculty from across MSU working in Lansing, recipients of a national award for engaged scholarship
- MSU promotion and tenure guidelines were revised in 2001, aligning documentation requirements with *Points of Distinction*.
- The Outreach and Engagement Measurement Instrument (OEMI), is launched at MSU in 2004, and has been used each year since.
- MSU hosted a national invitational conference on benchmarking engagement and begins partnering with other universities in using the OEMI.

Instrumentation (continued)

The OEMI is a survey that collects data from faculty and academic staff about their outreach and engagement activities. It collects two kinds of data:

- Data on faculty effort
 - Time spent (salary value serves as the basis of an *investment* metric)
 - Societal issues addressed
 - University strategic imperatives
 - Forms of outreach and engagement
 - Location of intended impact
 - Non-university participants
 - External funding
 - In-kind support
- Data on specific projects
 - Purposes
 - Methods utilized
 - Involvement of partners, units, and students
 - Impacts on external audiences
 - Impacts on scholarship
 - Creation of intellectual property
 - Duration
 - Evaluation

Administration of Data Collection

- The Office of the Associate Provost for University Outreach and Engagement manages data collection.
 - Process
 - Conducted annually
 - Institution-wide scope: all 17 colleges and other major administrative units
 - Survey is online, open 24x7, January–March
 - Reporting of effort from the previous calendar year
 - Respondents invited by the Associate Provost, but through the deans' and chairs' offices
 - Respondents
 - All/only faculty and academic staff (tenure and fixed-term)
 - Individuals, not units

Findings

Data collected with the OEMI 2004-2012

- 3,103 distinct (non-duplicative) respondents have completed the survey.
 - During this period the size of the faculty and academic staff has fluctuated increasing somewhat to approximately 5,000 in 2013.
- 82.3% of respondents report that they have participated in some form of outreach and engagement.
- The work reported by these respondents represents a collective investment by Michigan State University of \$148,185,141 in faculty and academic staff time devoted to addressing the concerns of the state, nation, and world through engaged scholarship (based on the actual salary value of time spent, as reported by respondents).
- Respondents have submitted 7,581 project reports.
- In the aggregate, these individual stories express the breadth of disciplines, qualities, impacts, and communities represented in MSU's engaged scholarship portfolio.

Utilizing Findings

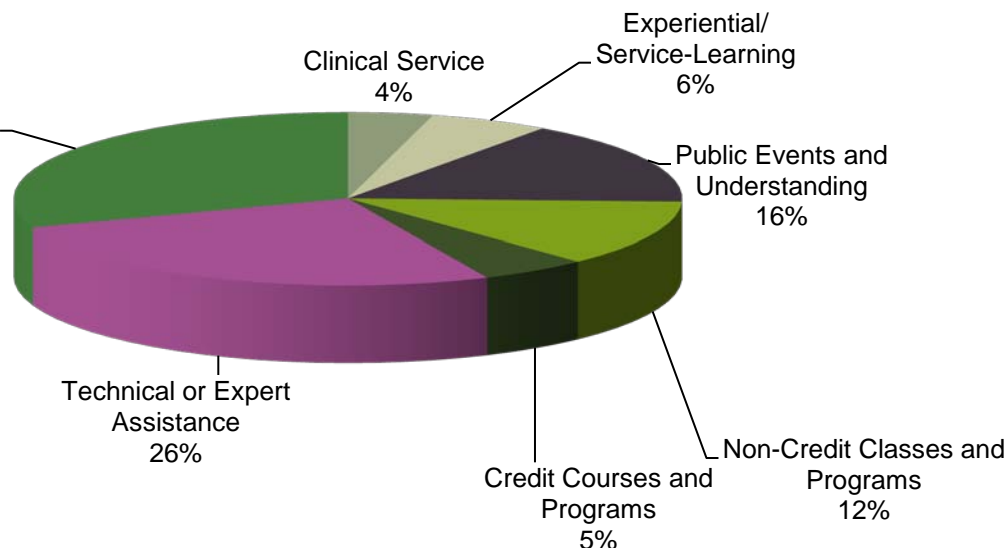
- OEMI data was used in MSU's last accreditation and Carnegie community engagement classification self-studies (MSU was a pilot site for the classification).
- The data has been used to document progress on MSU strategic imperatives (Boldness by Design).
- Targeted briefing material, based on the data, is frequently requested by the President's office to support public speaking appearances.
- Data documenting the thematic diversity and salary investment of university contributions to scholarship for the public good is annually published and shared with faculty and stakeholders.
- Unit-level data is periodically requested by department chairs and directors, and is also annually provided to deans to support planning and assessment activities.
- Geographic data has been used to map the locations of partnerships for proposals and other university development efforts (e.g., community, regional, and national foundations).
- The data has helped to identify faculty working in particular communities and/or around specific topics for the purpose of organizing systemically-focused community-based initiatives (e.g., Lansing, Detroit, Flint, STEM, health, child abuse, schools, economic development, transportation, Hispanic students, Native American projects, others).
- Potential participants for faculty development efforts have been identified from the data.
- The data is routinely reviewed in order to catalog engagement opportunities and outreach programs for the public.
- Original research has been conducted using the data.

Utilizing Findings (continued)

Proposed indicator of progress in meeting MSU's new Bolder by Design strategic imperatives:
increase to 40%

Outreach Research
and Creative Activity
31%

**Forms of Engagement reported by
MSU Faculty and Academic Staff in 2012**



Percentage of responses

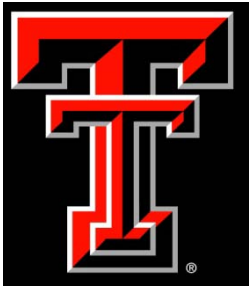
Note: The number of "responses" is greater than the number of "respondents." Respondents were given the opportunity to describe their engagement activities for up to two areas of social concern; each description was counted as a separate response.

Communication Strategies

- Institutional reports
 - University-wide and unit level data summaries
 - NCA-HLC accreditation and Carnegie classification self-studies: <http://outreach.msu.edu/documents.aspx>
 - Respondent reports
 - Tailored briefing materials
 - Maps and data visualizations
- The Engaged Scholar
 - Annual print magazine: <http://engagedscholar.msu.edu/magazine>
 - Quarterly e-newsletter: <http://engagedscholar.msu.edu/enewsletter>
- Recognition programs: <http://outreach.msu.edu/awards>
 - Outreach Scholarship Community Partnership Award
 - Engagement Scholarship W.K. Kellogg Foundation Engagement Award
 - C. Peter Magrath Community Engagement Award
 - University Outreach and Engagement Senior Fellows Program
- Public access catalog websites
 - MSU Statewide: <http://msustatewide.msu.edu>
 - Spartan Youth Programs: <http://spartanyouth.msu.edu>

Major Challenges

- Response rate
- Indirect communication with respondents
- Balancing the institutional researcher's desire for deep/broad data with respondents' willingness to give it
- Other and competing reporting requirements
 - Impression that there are too many reports
 - Challenges of consolidated solutions
 - Conflicts among data sets "of record"
- Language and meaning
 - Multiple interpretations of "engagement" exist and persist
- Relevance of instrument items across variations in the forms of work
- Limits of study and managing expectations
 - Focus on scholars leaves some work out
- Keeping up with demand for data
 - Frequency of requests, on top of existing commitments
 - Attractive efficiency of standardization, reality of niche needs
 - New prospects for data visualization demand expanding specialized support
 - Time for deeper analysis?



Overview

- Definition: Tech uses the Carnegie CE Definition
- OEMI Modified to 20 minute version
- OEMI Administration:
 - Online via e-mail in 2009, 2010, and 2011
 - 2012 Faculty in Digital Measures; Staff via e-mail



Report Distribution

- Analysis and Report issued by Office of Planning and Assessment web-site at <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/opa/oem.php>
- Distributed via e-mail to Faculty & Administration



Use of Findings

- Annual Institutional Strategic Plan, Priority 4
- Using data to leverage O & E activities
- Modeling desired behaviors through the assessment process (partnerships, shared visions, valuing others, leveraging)



Use of Findings for Decision-Making

- Identified more than 200 annual K-12 projects with no common goals or support structure
- Statistics include:
 - # of partnerships
 - # and type of partners
 - # of faculty, staff & students involved
 - external funding generation of partnerships



Use of Findings for Decision-Making (continued)

- Tech team to VA Engagement Academy proposed alignment of K-12 activities to impact Regional High School Grad Rates & College Matriculation – Implemented in College of Education but not across campus
- Modification of institutional Strategic Planning quantitative goals over time due to findings
- Qualitative stories shared with various media outlets



Major Challenges

- Significant drop in response rate when placed into Digital Measures
- Agreement among Engagement units to use data
- Instrument needs to collect essential data but not be one more onerous duty for faculty
- Data definitions need to be clean, understandable by general audiences
- Reliability due to OEMI administration change

K-State Benchmarking Engagement

- Definitions Guiding our :
 - Carnegie definition of engagement
 - Definitions for all engagement focus areas
 - Definitions for all modes of engagement
- Began with MSU's OEMI; Shifted to K-State EBT (Engagement Benchmarking Tool)

K-State: EBT Question Areas

- The time spent on engaged activities.
- The areas of concern which those activities address.
- The modes of engaged work.
- The locations where the engaged work takes place.
- The partners, participants, and students involved in your engaged project.
- The amount of external funding generated for those activities.
- The professional and public impacts of your engaged work.

K-State: EBT Administration

- EBT Administration
 - Online survey via email in February 2013 to large pilot group of “engagement champions”
 - 150 “Engagement Champions” – grant awardees; engagement partners; engagement board members; engagement award winners
 - 60% response rate

K-State EBT: Use of Results

Use of Results:

- Springboard for reporting to our KS Board of Regents on “civic engagement”
- Identification of faculty engagement (research / teaching) to highlight
- Pointed to problems with our engagement work on campus
 - Service Learning

K-State EBT: The Good News

- Generally, faculty who completed EBT found it useful (seem to like the tool)
 - Focus groups; Communication with depts
- K-State Strategic Plan (Vision 2025) has “engagement” as major focus area and EBT is viewed as the tool to benchmark faculty / dept / college work
- There is a new K-State online survey platform (Qualtrics) which will make survey more user-friendly

K-State EBT: Challenges

- Administration commitment to EBT
 - Provost transitions; Deans' commitment
- Survey administration challenges
 - Axio / Qualtrics; Staff transitions; workload
- Low response rate
 - No requirement to complete survey
 - Survey fatigue
 - Length of survey
 - How often do we survey
 - Multiple reporting requirements

Questions & Conversation



To request a guest account for a fully functional demonstration version of the OEMI, complete the form at:

<http://oemi.msu.edu/requestguestaccount.aspx>

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