PART FOUR

Is It Working? Three Universities Take On Assessment

Assessment Strategies in Civic Engagement and Higher Education

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All of the essayists in this volume share a conviction that higher education must play a greater role in preparing students for citizenship and strengthening local communities. One of the most pressing questions in the higher education-civic engagement field is how to encourage institutions that have not fully embraced a civic mission to do so. For skeptical administrators, faculty, students, and other university stakeholders, evidence of the effectiveness of engagement efforts at other institutions might provide a needed push for such efforts on their own campuses. At institutions that already pride themselves on teaching civic responsibility and building community partnerships, assessment strategies offer many other benefits. Assessment and evaluation can advance institutional learning about what works and lead to refinements in civic engagement programs and activities. In addition, assessment strategies can validate the work of professionals who take part in civic learning efforts, stimulate funding opportunities from alumni and other givers, and provide a powerful internal justification for continuing this work. Some have argued that the success of the higher education-community partnerships movement itself is dependent on the development and implementation of effective evaluation methods.[59] "In an era dominated by the twin themes of privatization and accountability," one report asserts, "and in light of eroding public funding for higher education, it is essential to build assessments of the civic contributions of higher education into ongoing accountability reports."[60]

Despite the importance of assessment or evaluation in civic education, the nature of the task itself is discouraging for some, and most colleges and universities do not

assess their programs to foster students' civic development.[61] Creating indicators of civic skill development and the community impact of university engagement can be fraught with challenges. Other obstacles to assessment include the lack of institutional priority assigned to higher education's teaching and service roles, the values-laden nature that some attach to civic educational and community service activities, and the other institutional priorities that compete for the attention and resources of higher education institutions, faculty, and administrators.[62]

What strategies can help foster a willingness to engage in assessment? Higher education has made significant advances recently in developing indicators of success, although they vary from institution to institution. Several factors critical to the success of institutional engagement have emerged, including support from administrative and faculty leadership as well as a mission statement and a holistic, intentional strategy that support and strengthen the institution's civic role. In May 2002, Campus Compact launched a three-year Indicators of Engagement project, which combines documentation and dissemination of best practices of engaged institutions with an effort to help institutionalize civic engagement across campuses. The project has identified a number of other indicators of engagement, including internal resource allocation, community voice, and forums for fostering public dialogue.[63] Such efforts to institutionalize engagement and standardize assessment can, as many of the essayists have documented, provide valuable benefits for both universities and communities.

As Maurrasse has pointed out, the evaluation of civic engagement activities depends on a "theory of change" in which universities must ask themselves, "what is it we are trying to achieve?"[59] Indicators of success and assessment strategies flow from the answer to this question. Put simply, well-designed assessment and evaluation strategies can not only improve the quality and outcomes of individual civic education programs and activities, but can also enhance the civic mission and agenda of colleges and universities writ large.

In the remainder of this essay, I present an overview of the assessment strategies that three institutions of higher education have undertaken, with a focus on strategies to evaluate students' development of civic skills. While Tusculum College, Morehouse College, and Michigan State University have approached the question of evaluation in different ways, there is much to learn from the successes and challenges each institution has experienced.

Tusculum College: A College-Wide Commitment to Civic Education

The "Civic Arts" Mission

Located on a 170-acre campus in Greeneville, Tennessee, Tusculum College actively embraces a commitment to civic engagement, or what it calls "the civic arts." As the term was originally used by the Roman orator, philosopher, statesman, and educator Cicero (from whose villa Tusculum takes its name), the civic arts referred to

the skills, attitudes, and abilities appropriate to citizenship in a democratic society. Education for effective citizenship is at the heart of Tusculum's mission, philosophy, and curriculum. For Tusculum College today, the Civic Arts Mission embraces excellence in both the skills and virtues necessary for productive citizenship. Since its founding in 1794, Tusculum has been affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (USA) and envisions itself as an institution of higher learning "in the civic republican tradition" committed to developing educated citizens who excel in academics, are committed to public service, and display solid character.

College and university mission statements frequently articulate a commitment to the public good but too often fail to bear witness to that commitment in performing the core functions of teaching, research, and service. At Tusculum, the civic arts emphasis is borne out not only in its mission statement but through a core curriculum, a focused calendar or block scheduling system, an emphasis on service learning, and a set of competencies that identify the skills and attitudes students are expected to develop. The Commons Curriculum, a set of core courses that all students must complete, provides a basis for an intellectual "common ground" that can stimulate learning and discussion from a shared point of reference. One Commons course, "Athens to Philadelphia," leads students through the development of democracy and examines the evolution of the concepts of self-government and citizenship in the United States. "Jerusalem" probes the roots of compassion and the qualities of good citizenship, while "Citizenship and Social Change" explores theories of social problems and aspects of social justice, and includes a 10-hour service learning component.

Other aspects of the Tusculum experience also emphasize a commitment to the civic arts. The "focused calendar," in which students take one course at a time for a period of three and a half weeks, allows undergraduates to delve deeply into a particular subject matter both in and outside the classroom. Many courses at Tusculum include community involvement, and the College's Service Learning Center not only develops and implements the Commons Service Learning courses, it also helps students in planning and undertaking other community-based projects.

Perhaps most important, at Tusculum community outreach is not seen merely as an add-on or as an episodic act of altruism, but as an integral part of the curriculum and the undergraduate experience. It is hoped that outreach and service learning activities become internalized and cultivate habits of responsible citizenship and lives devoted to contributing to the good of the community. Service is directly linked to classroom curricula as well as to independent student projects. According to Robin Fife, Director of the Service-Learning Center, students are grounded in issue-based knowledge and introduced to community leaders before engaging in the project. Reflection opportunities are integrated throughout the experience, individually through writing projects and together as a class through discussion and deliberation with peers and instructors.

Finally, Tusculum's Competency Program ensures that students develop the skills

both for fulfilling careers and for productive citizenship. By the time they graduate, students are expected to have developed proficiency in nine different areas that are deemed important to the Civic Arts Mission and to the development of an educated person. Tusculum emphasizes both what it calls the "foundational competencies" of writing, analytical reading, public speaking, critical analysis, computer literacy, and mathematics and the three "virtue competencies" of self-knowledge, civility, and ethics of social responsibility. Every course in the curriculum designates at least one foundation or virtue competency for development.

Assessment at Tusculum College: Alumni Surveys and the Virtue Competencies

The virtue competencies are at the heart of Tusculum's efforts to nurture in its students the skills and attitudes essential for democratic citizenship. Dr. Carolyn Brown, Assistant Vice President of Academic Affairs at Tusculum, spearheaded the design and implementation of a Virtue Competencies Survey of current students as well as an Alumni Survey that would measure the importance and extent of current involvement in civic and organizational activities.

Administered to 1,048 students in the spring of 2003, the Virtue Competencies Survey was created to evaluate the effectiveness of the virtue competencies for developing and enhancing students' citizenship skills. Students were asked to rate how important a variety of activities related to self-knowledge, civility, and the ethics of social responsibility were to their lives and how often they participated in those activities. The Self-Knowledge component of the survey posed questions relating to students' personal goals, the common good, and connectedness with self and others. The Civility component included questions about communication, conflict resolution, and personal/social skills. In the Ethics and Social Responsibility section, students answered questions about electoral participation, cultural differences and diversity, and listening and communication skills. A final section of the survey measured students' frequency of participation in twelve community-related activities including church, youth clubs, public and private K-12 schools, and civic and environmental organizations.

The results of the Virtue Competencies Survey showed that on average, students rated the activities related to the three competencies as "somewhat important" in their lives and reported that they "sometimes" participated in competency-related activities. There were significant differences among various sub-groups. For example, female students indicated significantly higher rates of importance and participation for all three scales than their male counterparts. Students in the sciences and those whose majors were undecided scored significantly lower than non-science majors. Those who were 26 years of age or older had significantly higher rates of Civility Importance and Participation as well as Ethics of Social Responsibility Participation. This was not an unusual finding for Tusculum since approximately one-half of its students are non-traditional working adults. The most frequent type of extra-curric-

ular activity revolved around the church and church-related activities. Survey analysts found that students' scores on Self-Knowledge Participation were a strong predictor of their involvement in extracurricular activities, while student demographic characteristics were not significantly related to extracurricular involvement.[64] Overall, while the Virtue Competencies Survey was useful for illustrating student levels of importance and participation, administrators acknowledge the need for further research to investigate its relationship to other civic engagement qualities.

With assistance from the Office of Institutional Advancement, Dr. Brown developed the 2003 Alumni Survey to determine how important academic and civic skills and aptitudes were to College alumni and to what extent the College helped foster these skills. Both personal (problem-solving, computer skills) and civic (working as a team member, developing leadership skills, exercising the rights and responsibilities of a citizen) skills and aptitudes were included in the survey. The survey also posed questions about past and current involvement in service and other activities, including athletics, environmental causes, youth groups, civic or service organizations, and other groups. Finally, the survey asked alumni to indicate how often they vote in local, state, and national elections. The first Alumni Survey was sent to students who had graduated from Tusculum in the last three years; future versions will include earlier classes of Tusculum graduates. Alumni Survey respondents reported that while service and other activities were still very important to them, their involvement had decreased in certain areas. One reason for this may be that in the years immediately after college graduation students are busy establishing careers, buying their first homes, and starting families. As a result of these data, Tusculum officials decided to target a broader base of alumni in the next survey cycle. As alumni become more established, officials hope that the level of civic engagement will rise. Overall, both the Virtue Competencies Survey and the Alumni Survey incorporated valid, well-designed measures of personal and civic skills and suggest that there is a close relationship between them. College administrators look forward to gathering additional data from future surveys that will, in turn, help to shape and reinforce the Civic Arts Mission.

Tusculum College has experienced some challenges during its first forays into assessment. Like many institutions, it faces the problem of gathering valid alumni data and of obtaining an acceptable response rate from its graduates. With regard to the Virtue Competencies Survey, College officials stressed the importance of having students take seriously the role of assessment. An additional challenge – and indeed, one shared by all engagement efforts – is to encourage students to think beyond their own career or personal aspirations and to assume the role of becoming responsible citizens in a larger community. The survey results and the articulation of Tusculum's Civic Arts Mission throughout the curriculum and beyond suggest that many Tusculum students are doing just that.

Morehouse College: Blending Personal Character and Community Spirit

Cultivating Leadership in Young African-American Men

The nation's only private, historically black, four-year liberal arts college for men, Morehouse College in Atlanta enrolls approximately 3,000 students and confers bachelor's degrees on more African-American men than any other institution in the world. Morehouse's mission and curriculum emphasize academic excellence and preparing students for leadership and public service. President Walter E. Massey articulated the Morehouse College philosophy when he said, "Morehouse's primary mission is to empower young men – intellectually, socially, and morally – to be leaders in their careers and in their communities."[65] Morehouse claims certain foundational principles upon which its existence stands, including justice, equality, liberation, the humane treatment of all people, and the development of the spiritual self and community.[66] In an environment that gives special attention to the development of African-American men, Morehouse College aims to both prepare students for careers or graduate study and to nurture in them the skills and attitudes that will enable them to be responsible leaders and citizens.

Established in 1995 with a gift from the Coca-Cola Foundation, the Leadership Center at Morehouse College is committed to strengthening society through ethical leadership. The Center was created to reflect the ideal of the "beloved community" embraced by Martin Luther King Jr. and other distinguished Morehouse alumni. The "beloved community" ideal supports the cultivation of compassion, integrity, and courage as primary values in the development of leaders. A 2003 evaluation report indicated a number of strengths of the Leadership Center and its programs, including institutional support, a program that is strongly tied to the College's mission, faculty involvement, and diversified funding.[67]

The Leadership Center offers several educational programs, such as the Coca-Cola Leadership Lecture Series, which sponsors public lectures by and discussions with prominent leaders and leadership experts including James MacGregor Burns and the Rev. Jesse L. Jackson. According to Leadership Center Director Dr. Walter Fluker, one of the most important benefits of sponsoring dialogues and conversations with such prominent leaders is in "bringing students right into the middle of those conversations early on, which creates a great way of providing a basis for their development as civic actors."[68]

As Dr. Fluker put it, Morehouse College prepares students to be change agents, to be transformers of culture. The expectation is that when students graduate, they will understand their own responsibilities as citizens of local, national, and international communities. Morehouse prides itself on a tradition of creating world-class leaders; alumni include Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., Maynard Jackson, and Spike Lee.

Assessment at Morehouse College: The "Soft Skills" of Leadership

Through several research projects, the Leadership Center involves faculty, students, and scholars-in-residence in data collection, analysis, and publication of papers on issues related to the Center's mission. For example, through the Faith Communities and Urban Families Project, the Center gathers data on low-income housing residents and adjacent faith-based institutions in four cities, prepares reports on the findings, and creates action plans for strengthening interactions between faith communities and the urban poor. The Public Influences of the African-American Churches Project is designed to facilitate research and dialogue among community activists, church leaders, and public officials about the impact of African-American churches on public policy and public discourse. In addition to the Leadership Center itself, Morehouse offers a leadership studies minor that includes a community service component. The minor also includes core courses in the foundations of leadership; history, theory, and future of leadership; and a capstone course taught by Dr. Fluker on ethical leadership from African-American moral traditions.

Several other centers at Morehouse embrace the College's commitment to leadership development and community involvement. Through a variety of initiatives housed within the Brisbane Institute (including a public service internship program, a Center for Studies in Applied Politics, and several community-based outreach programs), students are trained in political leadership and participate in community-based research that addresses the political and social needs of the African-American and larger communities. The Emma and Joe Adams Public Service Institute serves as a clearinghouse for activities that create positive community change.

Morehouse College and the Leadership Center are just beginning to initiate assessment efforts that they believe will validate the importance and effectiveness of their work. Survey results of participants in the Summer Ethical Leadership Program for pre-college African-American men indicate improvement along a variety of dimensions. Participants in the week-long experience reported that it positively impacted their ability to initiate social interaction, join with others, and make long-term commitments, and improved their self-control, self-esteem, and independence.[69]

Other efforts to create survey instruments that evaluate undergraduates' development of leadership and civic skills are under development at the Leadership Center. Part of the challenge in developing such instruments is the difficulty in measuring progress on Morehouse's emphasis on the "beloved community" and on the affective dimensions of leadership such as compassion, integrity, courage, and even love.

Morehouse College is intentional about developing what Dr. Fluker and Rheba Knox, Director of Education and Training at the Leadership Center, call the "moral and spiritual infrastructure" of students before focusing on the easier-to-quantify "hard skills" of leadership and citizenship. There is so much emphasis on those "hard skills" (such as community problem-solving and team-building), Fluker and Knox argue, that too often the "soft skills" that Morehouse focuses on are lost.

Michigan State University: A Public, Land-Grant Institution's Answer to the Question of Engagement and Assessment

Higher Education's Covenant With Society

As one of the earliest land-grant institutions in the United States, Michigan State University served as a model for other such institutions and today enrolls over 40,000 students. To a great extent, the University acknowledged during a major initiative that took place in the early 1990s, outreach involving faculty, staff, and students was already occurring through the University's fourteen colleges and its various centers and institutes. However, Michigan State wanted to aim higher, creating a new model in which outreach would become a central and integrated dimension of the institution's overall mission. Part of Michigan State's philosophy of engagement is that a land-grant university has a special role to engage its students, faculty, and instructional and research resources to improve workforce practice and economic strength *as well as* citizen participation and civic responsibility.[70]

More so than many other large public universities, Michigan State recognizes the need to maintain and strengthen what it calls the "social covenant" between the university and society for the benefit of both. University stakeholders acknowledge the importance of lifelong learning and believe that new public challenges involving, for example, economic competitiveness, public education, poverty, and the environment demand the application of scholarly expertise. In order to sustain public support and continue to improve the economic, social, and civic vitality of local, national, and international communities, universities must adapt to changing societal conditions. As one Michigan State report aptly put it, "the need for our University to adapt to the knowledge needs of a changing world is particularly challenging because society is undergoing rapid and fundamental transformation. This transformation requires higher education's active and creative involvement."[71]

In 1988, Michigan State made a commitment to "broaden, strengthen, and more fully integrate the extension and application of knowledge, or what [the institution] now refers to as outreach, as a primary mission of each major academic unit."[72] The W.K. Kellogg Foundation accelerated the University's burgeoning commitment to engagement by awarding a $10.2 million grant to help support this institution-wide realignment process. According to Dr. Lorilee Sandmann, then Director of Community Outreach at Michigan State, the Kellogg grant helped MSU move into the upper echelon of research universities performing outreach and allowed it to more easily forge links with like-minded organizations such as Campus Compact. At the completion of the grant in October 1995, MSU held a capstone symposium that brought together administrators and faculty from over sixty universities to focus on institutional strategies to strengthen and integrate outreach as a fundamental component of the mission of American colleges and universities. The presentations that took place at the symposium, as well as other reports produced during the course of the

Kellogg grant, offer valuable lessons for other institutions interested in enhancing their own engagement.

In January 1992, the Provost's Committee on University Outreach was convened and charged with articulating an intellectual foundation for outreach and making recommendations for strengthening outreach at Michigan State. During an 18-month period, committee members read and discussed relevant literature, interviewed more than 100 MSU colleagues, sought input from about 100 outreach constituents in roundtable discussions conducted across the state of Michigan, and studied university outreach as it was being undertaken at nearly twenty national peer institutions. The committee articulated its belief in a "social covenant" through its broad definition of "outreach": "universities exist to generate, transmit, apply, and preserve knowledge. When they do these things for the direct benefit of external audiences, they are doing outreach." At MSU, outreach is not merely a synonym for service, but, at its best, is embedded in the university's core functions – that is, outreach can occur as teaching, as research, or as service. The Provost's Committee identified four defining characteristics of what it called the MSU Outreach Model:

- First, outreach is defined as scholarship which must be reflective, cumulative, based on current knowledge, and resulting in new insights and understandings that are subject to critical review. In other words, outreach both draws on knowledge developed through other forms of scholarship and contributes to the knowledge base.
- Second, outreach cuts across and enhances both the teaching and research missions of the university. In this formulation, outreach can take a variety of forms including applied research, technical assistance, demonstration projects, impact evaluations, student service-learning, policy analysis, and off-campus credit and noncredit instruction.
- Third, outreach is conducted for the direct benefit of external constituents in ways consistent with the mission of the university. Outreach must be assessed in terms of both its impact on the external constituent and on the extent to which it enhances the university's other mission dimensions.
- Fourth, outreach is the responsibility of each academic unit in the same way that the units are responsible for serving the other dimensions of the university's mission. In MSU's approach to outreach, academic units are evaluated based on their contribution to the full breadth of the research, teaching, and outreach mission.[73]

Today, MSU is proud of the diversity in focus and approach of its outreach activities. The office of Dr. Hiram Fitzgerald, Assistant Provost for University Outreach and Engagement, has identified several focal areas for engagement, including chil-

dren, youth, and families; community and economic development; and community and family security. With strong leadership from the University Provost, Dr. Fitzgerald's office acts as a catalyst for engagement by helping faculty members understand how to engage the community in equal partnerships and by linking faculty resources and expertise with community needs. According to Dr. Fitzgerald, today the outreach and engagement mission of MSU is largely achieved through community-based research. For example, he cited his office's efforts to advocate for a broader definition of scholarship than the traditional disciplinary emphasis on peer-reviewed publications. "We are trying to convince faculty," Dr. Fitzgerald explained, "that in a community setting, peer review occurs as a *result* of publication, not prior to publication as in the disciplines."[74]

There are many examples of outreach initiatives currently taking place at Michigan State, such as My Brother's Keeper, Science Theater, and the Michigan Partnership for Economic Development Assistance. Through the mentoring program My Brother's Keeper, which is designed to improve the educational self-esteem of at-risk students, with an emphasis on African-American males, MSU undergraduates serve as volunteer mentors and role models for fifth and sixth graders. Science Theater, a program designed and operated by graduate students in physics and astronomy, provides hands-on, scripted science shows tailored to suit individual requests, most of which come from elementary and middle school teachers. The Michigan Partnership for Economic Development Assistance is committed to addressing the problems confronting distressed communities in the state of Michigan. The Partnership's activities involve producing multi-year workplans to promote and support local economic development efforts that include research, training, and direct assistance to development agencies and community-based organizations. These are just a few of the many ongoing engagement activities at Michigan State that demonstrate the fulfillment of the University's outreach mission.

Assessment at Michigan State University: Defining Successful Outreach and Encouraging Community-Based Research

By clearly identifying the features and potential benefits of successful outreach, MSU facilitates the realization of the outreach mission as well the implementation of assessment efforts designed to evaluate its effectiveness. The four characteristics of the Outreach Model outlined above demand significant internal changes, including the creation of incentives and rewards that reinforce the importance of outreach; reevaluation of budget to ensure that outreach is prioritized; and development of new approach to faculty and graduate student development that emphasizes the application of professional skills to outreach scholarship. Rather than housing the outreach function exclusively in a separate office that has little overlap with academic departments, MSU sought to integrate outreach into the teaching and learning experience by encouraging ownership of the outreach mission by each academic unit.

Questions of assessment have been important to Michigan State University since its reevaluation of outreach was initiated in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Many of the presentations and addresses that took place at the capstone symposium acknowledged assessment as central to the institutionalization of university outreach. As one speaker put it, "probably the greatest challenge in repositioning outreach is the need to develop quality indicators or benchmarks to measure outcomes and success."[75]

Those indicators, MSU recognizes, must measure not only faculty performance but also community perceptions of the success of outreach activities. Michigan State stakeholders realized that the goal of institutionalizing outreach would be achieved only when planning and evaluating outreach activities were considered just as important as the existence and content of those activities.

A dedicated group of faculty and administrators took up the question of assessment in 1993, when the Provost's Committee recommended the formation of a Committee on Quality Outreach. The new committee was charged with developing MSU's thinking about planning, measuring, and evaluating quality outreach. According to Dr. Sandmann, who chaired the committee, four assumptions grounded its work:

- Both quantitative and qualitative indicators are essential for evaluating the quality of outreach activities.
- Evaluation is useful at all stages of the process: for planning purposes; for formative and developmental purposes; and for summative, outcome purposes.
- Evaluation is necessary both at the unit and the individual level.
- Documentation must be tailored for its particular purpose.[76]

The committee developed a set of characteristics of quality outreach activities that could guide the design and implementation of those activities at MSU and at other institutions. Outreach should be flexible, creative, and innovative; it should have a long-term, sustained impact; and it should benefit the university, the discipline, the faculty member, and the constituent. The publication that the committee produced, *Points of Distinction: A Guidebook for Planning and Evaluating Quality Outreach,* includes a series of questions, planning tools, and suggestions designed to help academic units craft definitions and assessments of outreach specific to their own needs and areas of expertise. The guidebook identifies four dimensions of quality outreach (significance, context, scholarship, and impact) and provides an assessment matrix that can serve both as a planning guide for those embarking on outreach projects as well as a comprehensive tool for the evaluation of outreach activities. The matrix includes sample questions as well as qualitative and quantitative indicators that tap into the dimensions of significance, context, scholarship and impact.

Looking back recently on her tenure at Michigan State, Dr. Sandmann reflected on how difficult it was to develop quality indicators of assessment. It was a real chal-

lenge for the committee to operationalize indicators in a way that yielded achievable measures that could be attained in a cost-effective manner. In addition, Dr. Sandmann pointed out that getting all of the stakeholders on board was difficult, in particular, "trying to put yourself in their shoes and think, 'what would I need to know to know that my outreach was working?'"[77]

Despite the challenges inherent in assessment, tools that enable universities to evaluate a unit's outreach projects and activities, that assist faculty in assembling outreach portfolios, and that offer suggestions for how to reward quality outreach advance the institutionalization and routinization of outreach in by clearly documenting its occurrence and its effects. In addition, the standardization of measures of quality outreach across universities can further advance the outreach agenda. The work of the Committee on Quality Outreach, as well as the Provost's Committee on University Outreach, set a new agenda for Michigan State and other universities that positioned both outreach and the assessment as central components of the university's mission and work.

In the last several years, Michigan State University has devoted a great deal of time and energy to the question of assessment. In particular, the Assistant Provost's Office, under the leadership of Dr. Diane Zimmerman and Dr. Robert Church, has spent the last four years developing a web-based outreach and engagement measurement instrument and has solicited both internal and external feedback on the validity of that instrument. While most assessment efforts tend to focus on "ways to document student learning outcomes in terms of measurable competencies and other outcomes,"[78] MSU's assessment efforts have focused primarily on the scholarship of engagement and community-based research.

Dr. Fitzgerald at MSU explained that the instrument is designed to tap into several key outcomes. Most important, it will enable faculty and staff to obtain credit for performing outreach and engagement. The outcomes of the assessment effort will also be used for planning and resource education; to provide public accountability; to make cross-institutional comparisons of engagement activities; and to establish best practices within and outside the University. The assessment instrument includes both quantitative indicators (which might ask faculty what percentage of their time is spent on outreach, what kind of outreach they have performed, and how many students or colleagues were involved) and qualitative components (whereby faculty can provide more detailed information about the content and impact of outreach initiatives). When it is fully implemented over the next academic year, the tool will allow the documentation of faculty outreach and the systematic consideration of outreach as a component of promotion and tenure decisions as well as enable the University Provost to establish and evaluate outreach benchmarks for various academic units. Ultimately, the information faculty provide through the assessment tool will be incorporated within the MSU Statewide web site, enabling any interested citizen to identify which faculty member is performing what kind of outreach in any particular area

of the state. This effort will enable the efficient and effective transmission of engagement information and will create a clear, navigable "front door" to the University for community members.

Of course, like the other institutions profiled here, Michigan State University has had to confront obstacles in its effort to assess outreach and engagement. Dr. Fitzgerald points out that some of the greatest challenges have been convincing faculty to accepting community partners as equals and encouraging faculty to think of engagement as something other than service. The Outreach and Engagement office attempts to overcome these obstacles by assigning staff members to assist faculty in outreach assignments, facilitating focus groups that bring faculty and community members together, and offering workshops on conducting community-based research at the departmental level. Still, as Dr. Fitzgerald acknowledged, it will always be the case that some faculty will be more supportive of and amenable to engagement, while others will be opposed to or apathetic about it.

Conclusion

The colleges and universities that understand the need for assessment and the way to go about implementing evaluation tools and strategies share many similarities. Perhaps the most important are a belief that career preparation and citizenship education are not isolated endeavors, but instead go hand in hand, and a commitment to building support for engagement activities by documenting their results for the university and community partners to witness. The institutions profiled in this essay understand that the future of the civic engagement movement and its institutionalization in colleges and universities depends in large part on their ability to justify resource investments, stimulate improvement of engagement programs and activities, and document the results and outcomes of those activities for faculty, students, and communities. How can we measure the degree to which assessment has become a priority for colleges and universities committed to civic engagement? Dr. Sandmann, now at the University of Georgia and co-Director of the National Review Board for the Scholarship of Engagement, may have put it best in saying, "when you no longer need to talk about assessment because it's embedded in everything you do, then you've succeeded."[79]

Assessment efforts face some similar challenges. First, there is the issue of determining what the institution is trying to measure and what it is trying to achieve through its civic engagement programs. Many of the skills and attitudes of citizenship defy easy quantification, and much of the work of assessment is in creating and testing appropriate indicators of progress. Second, students must be willing to participate in and take seriously tests that are administered to them in order to allow for valid results about their attitudes and behaviors. Finally, institutional and faculty support for assessment efforts can enhance both their existence and their impact. The institutionalization of assessment requires first that colleges and universities prioritize their

civic roles and responsibilities. Institutional leadership and faculty buy-in can be instrumental in the decision to pursue assessment strategies, their design, and their influence on higher education mission, curriculum, and policy.

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Suggested Resources

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