

Chapter One: Introduction

Town-Gown Relations

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The phrase “town-gown relations” refers to the relationship between higher education institutions and the communities in which they are located. Essentially, town-gown relations portray the interdependent relationship of colleges and universities with the communities in which they reside—a relationship in which the outcomes for each are linked to the actions of the other. Both higher education institutions and their local communities hold assets supporting the viability of each other; they need one another and can be of mutual benefit. They “create shared value” through the deliberate maximizing of their interdependent relationships (ICIC, 2011, p.3). These relationships are nuanced, complicated, and sometimes difficult to navigate, with competing values and priorities within the various dimensions of interaction between the local community and the higher education institution (O’Mara, 2010). However, it remains vitally important to understand and enhance these relationships.

Many cities and towns across the U.S. are home to higher education institutions, with enrollments ranging from a few hundred to tens of thousands of students. Colleges and universities do not exist in a vacuum and communities cannot disregard the existence of their higher education institutions. They have historical relationships, which remain dynamic over the years of cultural and social changes. These relationships can be positive and productive, or sometimes strained and tense. It is important to understand the town-gown relations within a community in order to advance the continued engagement and partnership efforts with higher education.

History of Town-Gown Relations

Tension between higher education and the communities in which they are located has a long history, with much of the friction arising from the violent nature of the town-gown relations in medieval Europe. During this time, universities and their constituents were afforded privileges and control over their institutions and communities (Wood & Zuckerman, 1970; Frankhouser, 1997; Brockliss, 2000; Carlsen, 2008). Townspeople grew increasingly resentful and abhorred the bawdy and wild behaviors of students, frequently resulting in violent conflicts (Wood & Zuckerman, 1970; Frankhouser, 1997; Brockliss, 2000). Often, “conflicts between town and gown were rooted in competition for sovereignty and for land, the mutual disregard of students and their neighbors, and the ‘class’ conflict between university and town” (Wood & Zuckerman,

1970, p.3). These conflicts included brawls, pillaging of the university, and even death (Wood & Zuckerman, 1970; Frankhouser, 1997; Barr, 1963; Brockliss, 2000). The riot between students and townspeople on St. Scholastica's Day in Oxford in 1355 is an example of the extreme violence during this time (Frankhouser, 1997; Brockliss, 2000; Carlsen, 2008).

This adversarial relationship continued into colonial America as newly created higher education institutions were placed outside of the urban core; they erected walls around themselves, separated from their surrounding towns and isolated from social problems as they focused internally (Frankhouser, 1997; Carlsen, 2008; Martin, Smith, & Phillips, 2005; Fisher, Fabricant, & Simmons, 2004; Gumprecht, 2003). The 1800s began to see a shift in the role and practices of higher education and more positive histories of town-gown relations beginning to form with the Morrill Acts of 1862 and the establishment of Hull House in Chicago in 1889 (Carlsen, 2008; Frankhouser, 1997; Fisher, Fabricant, & Simmons, 2004; Mayfield, 2001). During this time, the nature and purpose of higher education was changing, giving it more of a public focus. "Accelerating forces of the Industrial Revolution...gave the expertise found in the colleges and universities practical significance" (Nichols, 1990, p. 5). However, there often remained a focus on the community as a client or laboratory (Mayfield, 2001) with a lack of an interdependent relationship between town and gown.

Even with a focus on higher education as a public good, tensions still existed between town and gown. After World War II, as colleges and universities became more accessible to ever larger bands of the populous, the institutions experienced an exponential growth in enrollment (Nichols, 1990). This increase in student population was often viewed with derision by the community because of the resulting negative impact it had on the neighborhoods. Larger universities require an expansion of physical space for more parking, more housing, and more services, not to mention the increase in the sheer number of students and proportionate problematic behavior, all of which encroach upon surrounding unprepared neighborhoods (Nichols, 1990; Gumprecht, 2003).

While there have been many negative relationships in the past, there have also been a variety of initiatives within the last 30 years that have resulted in more positive and productive relationships, specifically with the focus on experiential and community-based learning which gained prominence in the 1990s and early 2000s. Rooney (2005) posits four main factors that have helped to cool tensions between higher education and communities. These include the incorporation of community service into practices at the institutions, the enhanced involvement in building government relations and public policy, the realization that higher education can have an enormous impact on the local economy, and the development of partnerships that span multiple stakeholder groups. One must also consider the changing nature of the context in which higher education functions. For instance, increased privatization and pressures put on all community entities has also led higher education to form partnerships in the community utilizing its talents and expertise to carry some of the load of social problems (Fisher, Fabricant, & Simmons, 2004). These factors have brought to light the need for both the institution and the community to foster positive and productive working relationships. From medieval times to today, "the status of the campus as a privileged sanctuary has been replaced with one of an open community, subject to the influences of the real world" (Nichols, 1990, p.6), bringing into prominence its relationship with the community and the wider world.

Higher Education and Local Communities

The most visible indicator of the importance of positive town-gown relations is the sheer fact of proximal location. With both colleges and neighborhoods being location bound and immovable, it makes their relationship of utmost importance. Gavazzi and Fox (2014) offer a metaphor that illustrates this point:

What if you have a marriage that was arranged by others, that could not be ended, but that you had to make work regardless of how you felt about your partner? That, in a nutshell, is the relationship between campus and the community that surrounds it (Gavazzi & Fox, 2014, p.189).

Higher education institutions have major impacts on communities, from their role as an economic powerhouse to the cultural environment they create within a community. Colleges and universities can greatly influence a local economy through their hiring practices, institutional purchasing, the spending power of its constituency, (Nichols, 1990; Axelroth Hodges & Dubb, 2012; Sungu-Eryilmaz, 2009) and the potential to mobilize thousands if not tens of thousands of students. Towns that are home to colleges or universities are unique from their counterparts that have no such institutions (Nichols, 1990) and those institutions can have both positive and negative influences on the character of the local community. Ultimately “universities [and colleges] are potentially ‘good neighbors’ or ‘bad neighbors’ for a ‘community’” (O’Mara, 2010, p. 235).

Positive Impacts

There are a variety of positive elements to having a higher education institution located within a community. These include having a highly educated citizenry, social activities, and a vibrant culture (Gumprecht, 2003; Nichols, 1990). College towns typically have a younger population, higher educational attainment, higher incomes, lower unemployment rates, and more diverse populations (Gumprecht, 2003; Nichols, 1990; Weill, 2009). They also have an environment that fosters innovation and problem solving (Weill, 2009). A former university president said it best when he proposed that “ultimately what colleges can do best is help to instill a ‘college town’ ambience within their communities” (Weill, 2009, p. 37).

Negative Impacts

The presence of colleges and universities can also bring about tensions due to disruptive student behavior and criminal activity, congested thoroughfares, and animosity between the citizens and institution constituency based on political and social leanings (Nichols, 1990). They can also have a transient population, dilapidated housing, and a greater strain on the community infrastructure (Gumprecht, 2003; Nichols, 1990; Weill, 2009). Land use and development is another dividing issue among colleges and neighborhoods (Sungu-Eryilmaz, 2009; Gavazzi, 2016), sometimes resulting in the displacement of residents and pricing many homeowners out of the market (Axelroth Hodges & Dubb, 2012).

Many tensions within neighborhoods surrounding the college are based on an influx of students and rental properties, resulting in both positive and negative effects on the “cultural, social, physical, and economic” characteristics of a community (Universities UK, 2006, p.8). Conflicts arise based on student behaviors considered a nuisance to community residents, such as misconduct resulting from alcohol use, noise problems, and the physical appearance of housing (Nichols,

1990). Problems of competing priorities between the community and the institution, with each focusing internally on their own outcomes and well-being (O'Mara, 2010; Kemp, 2013) and possible imbalances of power between colleges and the citizenry (Fisher, Fabricant, & Simmons, 2004) can also affect the relationship. All of these concerns can become "edge/wedge" issues where problems occurring in the neighborhoods adjacent to the college creates a "wedge" between colleges and their surrounding neighborhoods, straining the relationship and making partnership more difficult (Gavazzi, 2016).

Overcoming Challenges

Building positive town-gown relations can be incredibly difficult, yet it remains vitally important. Both parties need to work through and resolve any resentment stemming from the demarcation between the community and the university which has led to breakdowns in communication (Mullin, Kotval-K, & Cooper, 2012). With both the positives and negatives taken together, many local communities see great benefit to having a local college or university and have even actively recruited them (Weill, 2009; Gumprecht, 2003). While the challenges can be great, there are many avenues available to improve town-gown relations and there is an expectation to do so. Many leaders and scholars have articulated that colleges and universities should be involved in their communities, take responsibility for the outcomes and characteristics of communities, and be leaders of innovation (Zocalo, 2012). Much in the same way that one would expect residents to get to know and support their neighbors, higher education must do so at an institutional level with its own neighbors.

Common Theme

Scholars have taken this relationship a step further and likened it to personal relationships such as friendship and marriage. Gavazzi, Fox, and Martin (2014) have created a typology of town-gown relations based on marital relationships, with each being defined by the level of comfort and effort required and the resulting level of satisfaction within the relationship. Town-gown relationships are similar to marriages in that they are two independent entities with the potential for shared activities and interests, yet differ from a marriage in that the entities are not actually able to physically leave the relationship. Gavazzi, Fox, and Martin (2014) propose that we should be striving for relationships that are stronger, more stable, healthier, and more satisfying; these qualities exist in relationships with shared activities. Barr (1963) equates the town-gown relationship to that of Aristotle's three types of friendships, which include those based on contact, pleasure, and common love of the good. He proposed that in a relationship based on a love of the good, "the university and the town would have to love something in common" (p. 304).

Both of these typologies, friendship and marriage, highlight the importance of a shared vision or common goal and shared activities, pointing to the essentiality of Campus Compact's benchmark of viable campus/community partnerships being "founded on a shared vision and clearly articulated values" (Torres & Schaffer, 2000, p. 5). Therefore, success in building or repairing a town-gown relationship lies in both parties working together to understand one another's world view and developing a shared vision of their future together. However, one must be careful of reaching too far for a shared vision. A shared vision for the community as a whole or even for the relationship between a town and the university may never materialize and shouldn't be forced. In general, this pervasive theme within university-community partnerships and collaborative work points to the importance of deepening the relationship through shared activities and two-way communication as the ultimate outcome, striving for stakeholder agreement that

there should be a positive relationship which impacts all involved. Collaborative work such as town-gown relations also involve sharing risks, rewards, and responsibilities centered on a common purpose (Himmelman, 1995), all referencing this theme of commonality.

Neighborhoods

This study focused on town-gown relations through the lens of higher education neighborhood-based engagement because neighborhoods continue to play a major role in our lives, even in our increasingly global and online society. With the place-based nature of higher education, institutions find themselves among neighborhoods, and many of the town-gown tensions can be linked to problems and conflicts within these spaces.

A neighborhood is defined as “a residential area of limited territory where social interaction occurs” (Hallman, 1984, p. 15). Each neighborhood has a physical space, unique characteristics and varying levels of social interaction. Hallman (1984) describes a neighborhood as a personal arena where people live, a social community where we interact with others, a physical place with boundaries and structures, a political community where people participate in governance, and a little economy where people exchange goods and services and build wealth. While not everyone defines a neighborhood in the same way or values them to the same extent, neighborhoods are important to our lives. We live in them, shop in them, work in them, educate our children in them, and age in them (Hallman, 1984).

With the sometimes personal nature of neighborhoods, interference by others such as higher education institutions can disrupt daily lives and lead to resentment and conflict. The impressions and perceptions of a college or university are made in the personal realm of neighborhoods (Nichols, 1990) as residents shop, work, and live out their lives in that location. If many of the conflicts in town-gown relations occur as a result of the changing nature of local neighborhoods (i.e., housing tenure and condition, traffic, behavior problems of student neighbors), then neighborhood-based engagement becomes an important unit of analysis.

Engagement Strategies

There are a multitude of ways that higher education may work with the communities in which they are located. Examples of partnership opportunities can be quite varied. They may include activities within the categories of service-learning, service provision, faculty involvement, student volunteerism, community in the classroom, applied research, institutional strategies, and local economic development (Martin, Smith, & Phillips, 2005; Fisher, Fabricant, & Simmons, 2004) among others. There is also a growing body of literature on anchor institution strategies as additional avenues for engagement practices. Strategies within the anchor mission occur within operations, investing, service provision, and learning (Netter Center for Community Partnerships, 2008). Achieving the anchor mission is a way to build positive town-gown relations, better root the institution in the community, and incorporate the welfare of the town into the everyday functioning of the college. All of these roles feed into town-gown relations and demonstrate the interdependent nature of higher education and the towns in which they are located.

Current Study

This study was developed to examine the relationships that the participating colleges and universi-

ties have with their surrounding communities, specifically around neighborhood-based engagement. To provide a better focus for analysis, neighborhood-based engagement was defined by the following categories of activities:

- Community Building with Off-Campus Student Housing
- Neighborhood Redevelopment and Revitalization
- Neighborhood Relations and Partnerships

This is not intended to diminish or ignore any other university-community partnership work and engagement efforts from the last few decades. The intent was to include other activities, beyond service-learning courses and engagement programming, which build positive town-gown relationships in order to broaden the conversation. It falls in line with other case study research on both town-gown relations and anchor institution strategies (see Kemp, 2013; Axelroth Hodges & Dubb, 2012; and Gavazzi, 2016). The following analysis and case studies from MOCC member institutions are provided as examples of relationship-building within both rural and urban neighborhoods in Missouri.

Methodology

Participants

During the 2014-2015 academic year, all 32 Missouri Campus Compact member colleges and universities were given the opportunity to participate in the study. Participants were recruited through the MOCC semi-monthly email newsletter, emails to main contacts on campuses, and outreach (email and phone) to individuals known to be working in the area of neighborhood relations. A total of 10 case studies (one per institution) were submitted. Recruitment asked potential participants to submit case studies that covered one of the following categories with examples provided for clarity:

- Community Building with Off-Campus Student Housing
e.g., facilitating student involvement in the neighborhoods in which they live; partnerships with municipalities centered on integrating students into the life of neighborhoods; educating students on code enforcement within their own neighborhoods; student substance abuse prevention work within neighborhoods; easing tensions between neighborhoods and students
- Neighborhood Redevelopment and Revitalization
e.g., programs that situate the university as a partner in neighborhood redevelopment and revitalization
- Neighborhood Relations and Partnerships
e.g., university committees that involve neighborhood representation; communication plans that involve neighborhood stakeholders; neighborhood involvement in capital plans at the institution; neighborhood-based civic engagement/service-learning programming

Process

Individuals interested in submitting a case study were asked to contact Missouri Campus Compact to obtain further instructions. They were then provided with an information sheet that contained a description of the study, the process for submission, a link to the informed consent form,

a link to the supplemental online survey, and guiding questions for the case study write-up.

Once case studies were emailed to Missouri Campus Compact, the Executive Director provided a first-level editing. This initial editing was completed to ensure that relevant contextual and descriptive information had been included and made revisions for clarification and readability. All of the initial revisions were shared with and approved by the case study authors. A second level of more detailed copyediting was completed by the MOCC Administrative Assistant with all edits sent back to authors for final approval. All participants were directed to the online informed consent for the study and a short survey to be completed along with the submission. A separate informed consent was used with the online survey.

Data Collection Methods

The main component of the study was the collection of case write-ups. All participants were provided with guiding questions before commencing the writing process. Guiding questions were used in order to provide some semblance of consistency in content for the case studies. These questions are provided in Appendix A.

Individuals interested in participating were provided a link to complete a short online survey. The online survey included basic questions that measured the following constructs: operations and logistics of the program/project included in the case write-up, outcomes addressed, institutional involvement in neighborhood relations, and partnership principles. The survey is provided in Appendix B.

Results

The case studies offered Missouri campuses the opportunity to tell their stories of success and challenges with town-gown relations based around neighborhood engagement. They provide a wealth of knowledge and experience from which we can all learn and use to inform our own practices. The cases form a picture of university-community engagement and partnerships within neighborhoods adjacent to the campus, those nearby, and even a nearby military base, which can be viewed as its own neighborhood. The cases demonstrate the wide breadth of activities undertaken by colleges and universities to improve and often repair relationships between their campuses and the neighboring communities. Activities include events such as block parties, involvement in neighborhood councils, programming specifically targeting neighborhood issues, streetscape improvements, and community planning. These cases are set forth as exemplars in neighborhood-based engagement and therefore provide a glimpse into best practices implemented at higher education institutions in Missouri. They provide hope and positivity within the town-gown construct which has a history of tension and conflict.

Case studies were examined and coded for common themes of practice. The following themes emerged from the analysis: making a commitment; ensuring mutually beneficial outcomes; addressing a community need, resolving conflicts and easing tensions; focusing on leadership capacity; planning for comprehensive partnerships; and incorporating the project into the mission of the institution. Each theme is detailed below with results from the online survey interspersed within each section. Other best practices of town-gown relations not covered in this analysis can be found in Kemp's collection of case studies from across the country (Kemp, 2013).

Commitment

In general, improving town-gown relations through neighborhood-based engagement involves commitment. This commitment manifests itself in the long-term nature of the partnerships between the college and the community and includes a commitment of resources. Throughout the cases, partnerships between the college and the community have either been in existence for a long period of time or they have been recently started, with an expression of their commitment to continue the partnership into the future. The online survey results revealed the same theme, with the item for measuring the number of years the program/project had been existence resulting in multi-year answers. The maximum length of time was 31 years with the minimum being four years. The average was approximately nine years and the median was five years. Each case seems to recognize the importance of developing partnerships over time, which is consistent with existing practices and principles of university-community partnerships. Making a long-term commitment has been proposed as a basic principle of engagement (Carlsen, 2008), and local economic development efforts specifically (Mullin, Kotval-K, & Cooper, 2012). Within the anchor institution strategies literature, a principle goal of the engagement work is to sustain the efforts (Axelroth Hodges & Dubb, 2012).

In many of the presented cases, there has been a commitment of resources such as funding, staffing, establishment of offices on campus, and other resources. In some instances, the resources were dedicated to the program or project from the start; in other cases, resources were allocated to the program or project after they experienced successful outcomes. In either context, commitment to the community was demonstrated through the allocation of resources. The online survey also included resource allocation information. Budgets reported in the survey ranged from \$0 to \$2 million, with funding originating from the university or both the university and the community. The survey also revealed that most cases had staffing which consisted of full-time, part-time, or student workers/graduate assistants. This commitment of resources is part of the risk taking and the sharing of resource elements which are necessary for successful economic partnerships (Nichols, 1990), and a guiding principle of authentic partnerships (CCPH, n.d.). The allocation of resources and the incorporation of these resources into the organizational structure of an institution are also indicators of the level of institutionalization for the partnership and engagement efforts (Furco, 2002; Gelmon, Holland, Driscoll, Spring, Kerrigan, 2001).

Mutually Beneficial Outcomes

The cases also demonstrate a concern for both community and college outcomes. They outline the benefits and impacts in the community as well as on campus, and stress the importance of including the community in consideration of outcomes. This theme demonstrated that the colleges weren't just serving the community but engaging as partners in joint initiatives. Mutually beneficial outcomes have consistently been upheld as a guiding principle and core element of partnerships and engagement (CCPH, n.d.; Torres & Schaffer, 2000; Carlsen, 2008). The online survey indicated the importance of outcomes since all but one case reported meeting identified outcomes and 80% of the programs were regularly (at least annually) evaluated. One case reported not having set outcomes. Although programs and projects may be meeting outcomes and evaluated regularly, only 60% are measuring the impact that the program or project has on the community.

Addressing a Community Need

As is the nature of higher education community engagement, all of the programs and projects in

the cases address a community need. In most of the cases there have been transitions in the neighborhoods resulting in economic decline and distress. A wide variety of issues or needs were addressed, including revitalization and physical decline, youth outcomes, community planning and visioning, crime and safety concerns, and economic conditions. One of the more prevalent issues indicated in these cases were conflicts between the institution and neighborhoods, indicative of the history of town-gown relations in general. Much of this conflict arises from student behaviors that disrupt the adjacent neighborhood, and in some cases has been the impetus for engagement with the community. In others, resolving of conflicts and tensions was an unintended yet welcomed benefit. Addressing a need is a common theme within university-community partnerships. Ensuring that the partnership has a purpose and addresses community needs while maximizing strengths are two guiding principles for authentic partnerships (CCPH, n.d.). Carlsen (2008) suggests that ensuring that a particular program or project is needed and welcomed is a part of the “recipe for engagement.”

Comprehensive Partnerships

The programs, events, and projects presented here provide a snapshot of the comprehensive nature of these town-gown interactions. There seems to be great breadth in the partnerships both in the community and on campus. The cases illustrate the involvement of a variety of stakeholders and leadership in the community, all of them concerned with the betterment of that community. On campus, the initiatives have demonstrated a similar stance of involving a variety of stakeholders within the college, who are all concerned with the betterment of the students and the institution. Since institutions can be just as complex as neighborhoods, a wide breadth of partners on campus is equally important to ensure a diversity of voices and perspectives. The involvement of a broad spectrum both on and off campus illustrates how one can involve multiple partners based on the strengths they bring to the table to address a community need. Community issues as well as conflicts with the community are complicated matters and require a multi-sector approach, which is often a guiding principle of effective engagement (Torres & Schaffer, 2000). Involving a variety of stakeholders and partners has also been found to be a best practice in anchor institution strategies (Axelroth Hodges & Dubb, 2012).

Leadership

Leadership on campus and in the community was a common theme in the cases, each demonstrating the importance of leadership in the university-community partnerships. In some instances, projects and programs were successful because of leadership on campus, such as the involvement of key staff or presidential participation. Other cases demonstrated the leadership capacity in the community through involved neighbors and strong agency partners. A lack of leadership capacity in the community was also acknowledged as a challenge. This component of strong leadership falls in line with other proposed principles and practices of partnership. Leadership is an essential element of successful university-community partnerships (Nichols, 1990; Torres & Schaffer, 2000). It is also an important component of a community’s capacity for change (Goodman et. al. 1998). Nichols (1990) goes so far as to suggest that “aggressive leadership” on the part of the university president and the community leaders is needed in order to set the tone for the importance of the work. Others have been in agreement with propping up presidential leadership as a guiding principle and ensuring presidential involvement in community partnerships where appropriate and needed (Weill, 2009).

Civic Mission and Public Purpose

The cases presented here illustrate how town-gown relations and neighborhood engagement fit into higher education's existing missions, values, and practices. In some cases, work with surrounding communities is part of the history of the institution. The online survey responses indicate that neighborhood relations are part of the strategic plan in all of the institutions, and that 80% of the institutions include neighborhood relations in their mission statement. Each of the cases demonstrate the benefits to the institution and the students by maximizing the strengths of the college within these community partnerships and focusing on what the campus is realistically able to provide. Mullin, Kotval-K, and Cooper (2012) propose that a guiding principle for effective town-gown relations is that institutions must be realistic about what they can deliver, and define what those efforts should be from its stated roles and objectives while still maintaining their core mission as an educational institution. Recognizing the importance of the civic mission and public purpose of higher education is not a new concept. The Industrial Revolution brought a shift in higher education philosophy with an emphasis on a political view. "The political philosophy views knowledge learned at colleges and universities as having practical application toward solving the complex problems of our society" (Nichols, 1990, p. 5). This application of knowledge and the public purpose of higher education are also evident in Dewey's educational philosophy, which is the backbone of much community-engaged work (Saltmarsh, 2008).

Summation of Themes

Overall, the common themes found in these cases illustrate the following best practices for furthering positive town-gown relations through neighborhood-based engagement:

- There should be a commitment to the long-term nature of university-community partnerships and a dedication of resources to the program/project.
- Outcomes of the engagement programs and project should be mutually beneficial, impacting both the higher education institution and the community.
- Programs and projects should address a real need in the community, which may include conflict resolution.
- There should be a breadth of partnerships both in the community and on campus, pulling together a wide expanse of stakeholders.
- Strong leadership capacity from both the campus and the community is at the forefront for the sustainability and longevity of the engagement initiatives.
- Town-gown relations fit naturally into the civic mission and public purpose of higher education, but institutions cannot lose sight of their core mission as providers of higher education.

Outcomes

There are many outcomes that can be associated with town-gown relationship building, community engagement, and neighborhood-based engagement. The following lists are the outcomes associated with these case studies of neighborhood-based engagement, some with intended outcomes that were planned, and some unintended outcomes that were later realized. These outcomes, both intended and unintended, coincide with those found within other community engagement literature. The lists are divided into outcomes pertaining to the relationship with the community, the outcomes for the institution, and the outcomes for the community.

Building Relationships

- reducing conflict with community and decreasing complaints from neighbors
- building stronger relationships with stakeholders
- fostering communication and building trust
- incorporation of community voice into decision making
- building better relationships between students and community and between institution and community
- providing an access point and putting a structure in place for handling complaints

Institution/Campus Outcomes

- providing avenues for student engagement
- providing an educational experience for students
- enhancing student outcomes such as leadership development, cultural competence, and an understanding of community issues and community development
- enhancing academic programs
- changing student behavior and helping them learn how to be a good neighbor
- fostering collaboration among campus departments

Community Outcomes

- revitalization including physical, economic, and community improvement
- addressing specific issues (literacy, crime, safety, ADA compliance)
- acting as a catalyst for further development and investment
- easing racial tensions
- creating sense of place and building community pride
- creating a vibrant community and improving the streetscape
- utilizing expertise from the institution
- providing technical support

Challenges

While many positive outcomes can be realized through this engagement work, there are also many challenges. The following obstacles were presented by the case study authors:

- Funding deficiencies and lack of resources/capacity to meet demand
- Buy-in from the institution and community stakeholders
- Communicating the value of the engagement initiative and marketing it to both the community and the campus
- Retaining student participation with declining student enrollment and the turnover rate of students as contributing factors
- Involvement of community stakeholders
- Differences in the communication styles between community and campus
- Assessment of the initiative and measuring impact
- The slow process of developing partnerships
- Lack of strong leadership in the community

Next Steps

The online survey indicated that the cases already followed many of the guiding principles for

university-community partnerships, principles outlined by Campus Community Partnerships for Health and Campus Compact (see CCPH website for a list of the principles <https://ccph.memberclicks.net>). Responses to the online survey revealed that all of the cases had 100% of the partnership principles at least “somewhat in place” while most respondents said the principles were “definitely true of the partnership.”

Given the adherence to the guiding principles of partnership and the successes described in the cases presented, it is not surprising that the stakeholders desire to continue these efforts. “Next steps” provided in the cases demonstrate a commitment to the partnership for deepening relationships and developing trust, continuing and building on avenues for better communication, and engaging additional groups/stakeholders in these initiatives. All of these factors are important for continued success. Improved communication and the resolution of conflicts are necessary to improve town-gown relations and move forward with economic development partnerships (Nichols, 1990).

Future plans include continuing work to increase student involvement, targeting areas such as recruiting, welcoming and incorporating students into the engagement initiatives, and continuing to combat student turnover and enrollment issues. Even with the challenges they faced, campuses have demonstrated a desire to continue the work and expand the scope of their program, project, or event, and improve assessment strategies of the initiatives to demonstrate successes and the continuing need for their work. As the authors of the cases outline, with capacity development and a move toward sustainable funding and self-sufficiency, they can continue to have strong partnerships for lasting community improvement and change.

Conclusion

This research project provided the opportunity to tell the story of town-gown relations through neighborhood-based engagement in Missouri. While these cases may not be representative of all town-gown relations, this work demonstrates successes in building relationships in local communities. The following themes emerged from the analysis of the cases provided: making a commitment; ensuring mutually beneficial outcomes; addressing a community need; resolving conflicts and easing tensions; focusing on leadership capacity; planning for comprehensive partnerships; and incorporating the project into the mission of the institution. Although they may not be indicative of all relationships, many of the common themes found in these studies are also present in the existing literature on engagement and university-community partnerships.

Beyond the common themes that emerged from the analysis, another element was evident in the cases, which was related to how neighborhoods have changed over the years. Once thriving and stable, numerous neighborhoods have morphed into decay and economic distress. How has this happened? As community partners, as anchor institutions, as educators—how did we allow this decline? It seems as if neighborhoods have now come into our focus as we took our eyes off the ivory tower mentality. How it happened is beyond the purview of this study. However, it stresses the importance of higher education in returning neighborhoods to their splendor and working in partnership with communities to ensure the neighborhoods don’t slide backwards after they are transformed into healthy localities. Engaging with neighborhoods is not only a way for higher education to build positive town-gown relations, but is also an avenue for enhancing the quality of life and transforming often forgotten and distressed communities. It’s how we play our part in the world and contribute to its vitality.

Case Studies

Cases were collected from ten Missouri Campus Compact member campuses, representing both rural and urban areas across the state and both public and private four year institutions. The institutions included within this document are: Washington University in St. Louis; Saint Louis University; Northwest Missouri State University; Harris Stowe State University; University of Missouri-St. Louis; Rockhurst University; University of Missouri-Columbia; Drury University; William Jewell College; and the University of Central Missouri. Categories were provided as guideposts for submission of relevant cases. These included: community building with off-campus student housing, neighborhood redevelopment and revitalization, and neighborhood relations and partnerships. All the cases have been divided into the separate categories in subsequent sections for ease of organization. However, we recognize that the complexity and comprehensive nature of the projects/programs do not allow us to fully truncate the work into only one category.

Author

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