

## **2016 Strategic Plan Key Question Committee – Final Report**

**Question(s):** How do we take our community engagement and experiential learning efforts to the next level? How do we measure impact instead of participation?

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### **Summary:**

Over the past several years, we have experienced success at integrating community engagement and experiential learning into the life and identity of the campus and gaining national recognition for our efforts. It is likely that we have reached or will soon reach a plateau in the number of students, faculty, and staff that are involved in community engagement and experiential learning. If we are to continue to excel in this area, the next iteration of the strategic plan should focus on the quality, rather than the quantity, of our work.

### **Key Findings Summary:**

1. Alumni, students, and community partners agree that they benefit from community engagement and experiential learning, however, there is very little quantifiable data regarding impact. More sophisticated assessment of impact and more intentional programming to achieve impact is needed.
2. Community partners are generally satisfied with their relationships with ISU, but they would like greater intentionality and additional material support.
3. The implementation of the experiential learning requirement in each major has been inconsistent and no system of accountability has been established to evaluate the requirement.
4. The extent to which community engagement and experiential learning is acknowledged in Promotion and Tenure documents and rewarded by personnel committees is inconsistent. There is not clear evidence that community engagement and experiential learning is recognized in teaching and learning or in research and creative activity.
5. We appear to have reached a plateau in the quantity of involvement in community engagement. Given that we are not likely to continue to increase the number of faculty, staff, and students we need to focus energy more on improving the quality of engagement while maintaining our high levels of involvement.
6. There are some programmatic/structural considerations that we need to address. In particular, students would like more opportunities to study abroad but are challenged by cost. Distance students expressed a need for greater assistance with internships and related experiences.

### **Recommended Actions Summary:**

1. The University should continue to support Study Abroad, Center for Student Research and Creativity, American Democracy, and the Center for Community Engagement with the caveat that these programs establish aggressive benchmarks and assessment methods that

measure impact.

2. Develop and implement programs that demonstrate community impact with a particular focus in the Ryves neighborhood.
3. Develop and implement a method of periodically assessing the experiential learning requirement in each academic program. Follow-through with programs that have not effectively implemented a requirement.
4. Revise, as needed, Promotion and Tenure documents across the University that do not recognize community engagement and experiential learning in both teaching and learning AND research and creativity.
5. Develop and implement on-going assessment of the impact of community engagement and experiential learning on students.
6. The Center for Community Engagement should maintain their service programs and grants, but also place increased emphasis on capacity building and assessment across the University.

## **Background:**

**Prior to Current Strategic Plan** - The Center for Public Service and Community Engagement (CPSCE) was established in 2001 with 2 staff members- a full-time director and full-time administrative assistant. Community Engagement and Experiential Learning were identified as possible areas of distinction for ISU during a 2003-04 planning process. Following this planning process, a baseline was established for the institution to support community engagement and experiential learning. University-wide definitions of community engagement and experiential learning were developed, the role and staff of CPSCE was expanded, the Business Engagement Center was established, and \$2 million in funding from the Lilly Endowment was earmarked to expand the program. In 2006, ISU was one of the first groups of institutions to receive the elective Community Engagement Classification from the Carnegie Foundation.

**Current Strategic Plan and Special Emphasis Study** – In 2008, ISU received permission from the Higher Learning Commission to complete a special emphasis self-study of Community Engagement and Experiential Learning. The special emphasis study coincided with the development of Goals 2 and 3 of the Pathway to Success strategic plan. Several accomplishments have been achieved as a result of the special emphasis study and Pathway to Success. These include:

- Development of a more centralized infrastructure to support community engagement and experiential learning. Related offices were reorganized into a unit lead by the AVP for Community Engagement and Experiential Learning. A Dean of Extended Learning position was created to lead our credit outreach activities.
- At the request of the Board of Trustees, each academic department and college was required to review their promotion and tenure documents and ensure that community engagement and experiential learning were valued and reflected in these documents.
- At the request of the Board of Trustees, each academic program was required to include a culminating experiential learning requirement.
- Mechanisms for tracking experiential learning and community engagement were implemented.

- The Career Center was reorganized and relocated to a new location in the center of campus.
- The community service leave program was implemented.
- ISU received national recognition from Washington Monthly and the Corporation for National and Community Service for our community engagement efforts.
- Participation in student research has been expanded through the development of the Center for Student Research and Creativity.
- Study abroad was expanded through the Unbounded Possibilities program.

Most recently, the Division of University Engagement was established and included the offices reporting to the former AVP for Community Engagement and Experiential Learning. The Institute for Community Sustainability and Community School of the Arts have transitioned from the Unbounded Possibilities Program to the new division.

**Challenges** - We have experienced success at achieving most of our benchmarks associated with the Pathway to Success. The two areas where we have not achieved enough progress is study abroad and utilization of the Career Center. Although progress has been made in both areas, additional work is needed. In 2014, the University received \$3 million from the Lilly Endowment to improve post-graduate career outcomes. The Career Center is leading this effort, but needs greater engagement by the entire University.

An on-going concern with the current strategic plan has been our focus on participation. While it is important that we involve the majority of the campus in community engagement and experiential learning, we must do a better job of attending to impact

## **Analysis Methods:**

The following data sources were used in this analysis:

- Surveys of alumni, students, and community partners
- A survey of academic programs regarding their experiential learning requirement
- Reports associated to the current strategic plan
- ISU's self-study for the Community Engagement Classification from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

## **Key Findings:**

### **Student, Alumni, and Community Surveys**

#### Students

Students were surveyed to determine their involvement in community engagement and experiential learning during their time at ISU. Area of study, post-graduation plans, engagement activities, and student organization participation were addressed. Two prominent themes emerged from the survey. Twenty-one percent of the students indicated they would like to have studied abroad, but it was not financially feasible. Distance students indicated frustration with campus support for internship and clinical placement.

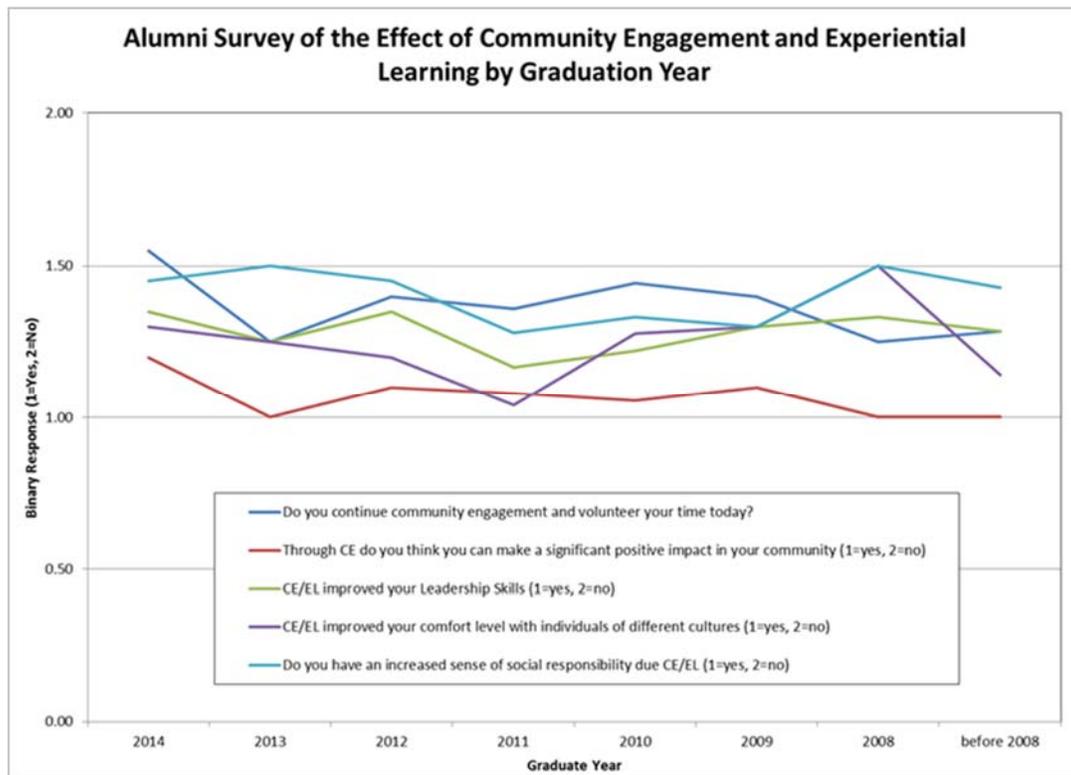
Overall, students are seeking service experiences, as was indicated by the 72% who responded to

engaging in some form of service opportunity through University Engagement programming. The university-wide events with the greatest participation included: Donaghy Day (63%), Stop and Serve (42%), and Earth Day (30%). Seventy-seven percent of students participated in University Engagement events through the following student groups: Classes, Fraternity/Sorority, Student Organization/Club, or Athletic Team.

Overall results from the survey indicated the students are engaged and enjoy their experience. When asked of current students “What was it about these experiences that was most beneficial?” the following were themes that resonated from their personal response: helping people, personal growth, transferable skills, cultural awareness, community and campus interaction, and hands on experience.

Alumni

Alumni were surveyed to measure the impact of community engagement and experiential learning on their postgraduate life, professionally and personally. Overall, the alumni do agree with the below statements that Community Engagement and Experiential Learning improved their leadership skills (1=Yes, 2=No, average responses almost all below 1.5), improved their comfort level with different cultures, and improved their social responsibility. The students mainly saw community engagement as a benefit to the community (red line) and most of them continue to volunteer their time today (dark blue line).



Seventy-two percent of alumni agree that experiential learning and community engagement improved their leadership skills. A theme throughout the survey results indicated online/distance students wished there were more opportunities for engagement that could be coordinated in their

hometown. "Make community resources available for online students", was noted by one survey respondent.

An overwhelming response throughout the survey was the continued support of community engagement and experiential learning. One survey respondent shared "I am very thankful ISU introduced me to community involvement...I have children and not as available to volunteer currently. However, due to my experience at ISU, I plan to get my children involved once they get a little older."

### Community Partners

Community partners were surveyed regarding the nature and quality of their engagement with the University. Volunteers (episodic or one day events) allow for community partners to focus on clients and the community without being distracted by mundane physical tasks. Survey responses noted "Saves us a lot of time so that we could work on other matters" and "Our staff was able to be involved with families more than working the event." Programs such as AmeriCorps and Federal Work Study are financial investments in community partners. "Helping us offset the cost of all our program staff" when speaking about volunteers and the jobs they accomplish for the agencies was a strong survey theme.

Most comments regarding student volunteers and interns were positive. One community respondent commented the following about students interacting with their clientele, "...children are able to meet and learn the back stories of the ISU students and get inspired to continue their education. Community partners did voice a concern about follow-through with student interns. Consistent mid-term and final checks would be helpful to complete the internship contract and confirm the success or concerns of the student intern.

### Survey of Experiential Learning Requirement in Academic Programs

The following programs completed the survey:

Chemistry	Insurance and Risk Management
Physics	Communication Disorders
BSW	FNP program
MSW	Student Affairs and Higher Education
Language Studies (ug)	M.Ed. Administration & Supervision
Finance	ED.S.
Elementary Education	Music Education
Athletic Training	Music Business
(Professional/Undergraduate)	Music Performance
Interior Architecture Design	Music Composition
Construction Management	Music Liberal Arts
Safety Management	Nursing Education
Architectural Engineering Technology	Nursing Administration
Professional Aviation Flight Technology	DNP
Aviation Management	Recreation and Sport Management
Unmanned Systems	Physical Education - Exercise Science
Criminology - B.S.	

Many of these programs had well-established experiential learning requirements prior to implementation of the University-wide requirement. It is unlikely that this selection of departments is representative of all academic programs. A more thorough review should be undertaken by Academic Affairs and University Engagement.

Following are some findings from this survey:

- Eighteen (56%) of the programs provide multiple ways for students to meet the experiential learning requirement. Fourteen programs (44%) do not have multiple pathways.
- The most common type of experiences are work-based, including: internships/clinical (26/81%) and student teaching (6/19%). Five programs (16%) have a arts/performance/creative requirement and 11 (34%) offer student research.

### **Community Engagement Classification Self-Study**

In December 2014, the Carnegie Foundation approved our reclassification application. Following are the recommendations we received in an approval letter from the Carnegie Foundation:

1. The assessment practices required by the Community Engagement Classification must meet a broad range of purposes: assessing community perceptions of institutional engagement; tracking and recording institution-wide engagement data; assessing the impact of community engagement on students, faculty, the community, and the institution; identifying and assessing student learning outcomes in curricular engagement; and providing ongoing feedback mechanisms for partnerships. That range of purposes calls for sophisticated understandings and approaches in order to achieve the respective assessment goals. We urge institutions to continue developing assessment toward those ends.
2. Partnerships require a high level of understanding of—and intentional practices specifically directed toward—reciprocity and mutuality. Campuses have begun to attend to processes of initiating and nurturing collaborative, two-way partnerships, and are developing strategies for systematic communication. Maintaining authentically collaborative, mutually beneficial partnerships takes ongoing commitment, and we urge institutions to continue their attention to this critical aspect of community engagement.
3. With regard to faculty rewards for roles in community engagement, it is difficult to create a campus culture of community engagement when there are not clearly articulated incentives for faculty to prioritize this work. We would like to see more examples of campuses that provide evidence of clear policies for recognizing community engagement in teaching and learning, and in research and creative activity, along with criteria that validate appropriate methodologies and scholarly artifacts. We urge Community Engagement Classified institutions to initiate study, dialogue, and reflection to promote and reward the scholarship of engagement more fully.
4. Community engagement offers often-untapped possibilities for alignment with other campus priorities and initiatives to achieve greater impact—for example, first-year programs that include community engagement; learning communities in which community

engagement is integrated into the design; or diversity initiatives that explicitly link active and collaborative community-based teaching and learning with the academic success of underrepresented students. There remain significant opportunities for campuses to develop collaborative internal practices that integrate disparate initiatives into more coherent community engagement efforts.

### **Findings from Current Strategic Plan**

Overall, we have been successful in achieving our benchmarks for Goals 2 and 3. Student involvement in experiential learning and community engagement grew throughout the implementation period. Following are some specific findings related to Goals 2 and 3:

- The community engagement and experiential learning grant program has been successful. Grants funded by the strategic plan for faculty, staff, and students exceeded \$ 164,569.31 with a student participant count of 3,506 for the 2014 and 2015 academic years.
- The undergraduate research program has flourished primarily through the efforts of the Center for Student Research and Creativity.
- The Career Center has increased participation in their programs and activities. There is still considerable work to do to create a more intentional and coherent career development experience for all students. A grant from the Lilly Endowment is providing significant funding for these efforts.
- The American Democracy Project has continued to engage increasing numbers of students, however ISU lags behind our peers in voting behavior of students. The number of students participating in study abroad, particularly faculty-led trips, has increased significantly. Momentum in this initiative has been building every year.
- The SENCER initiative has floundered throughout the implementation period of this strategic plan. Identifying a relatively permanent leader for the program has been a challenge.

### **Recommended Actions:**

Programs that have been supported by the current strategic plan have increased student participation in community engagement and experiential learning. The Center for Student Research and Creativity, American Democracy Project, Study Abroad, and the Center for Community Engagement each play a unique role in enhancing the student experience. These programs can all play a critical role in taking our efforts to the “next level,” but for that to happen each program will need to develop more sophisticated methods of assessing their success and impact.

Our commitment to the Ryves neighborhood has grown over the implementation period for the current strategic plan. Some of our partnerships with non-profit organizations in that area can be expanded to help us achieve our goal of impact. The Health Clinic program at the Wabash Valley Health Center needs to be institutionalized. We have operated the program for years with funding from a variety of sources, including the Lilly Endowment. It is time to make a long-term commitment to the program. Our partnership with Franklin Elementary School is another program with promise for growth. The Bayh College of Education and Center for Community

Engagement should work with the Vigo County School Corporation to develop a more in-depth commitment to Franklin. The Vectren Foundation continues to facilitate the development of a community action plan for the Ryves Neighborhood. ISU should continue to be a part of that conversation and play a role in the implementation plan that is developed.

In 2011, each department self-reported that every academic program in the department had added an experiential learning requirement. No assessment of the quality or nature of the experience was required. At this time, it is unclear whether every academic program has indeed implemented a serious and intentional experiential learning requirement in the major. We must complete an assessment of the programs and require action of those programs that are not in compliance. In the same year, each department and college reported that they had integrated recognition of community engagement and experiential learning in their Promotion and Tenure documents. It is clear that, at least in practice, community engagement and experiential learning are not recognized in a meaningful way by some departments and colleges. The Carnegie Foundation is clear about their expectation that community engagement is recognized in both teaching and learning AND scholarship and creativity. We are not meeting that expectation.

Our assessment efforts must expand beyond participation with greater focus on student and community impact. The Center for Community Engagement should take a leadership role in helping lead the assessment efforts. The Center also has an important role to play in helping faculty tie their engagement and experiential learning activities more explicitly to learning objectives. The Center for Community Engagement and Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence need a closer partnership to better prepare faculty for work in this area.