

## Comments from Open Forum #3: Our Region. Our Stakeholders.

### Do we want to remain in civic engagement? Are these too many areas of focus for public engagement?

- I like them all. It plays to the strengths of our faculty.
- We have people within the university who can address all of the points (on the slide).
- There is confusion between A (stewardship activity) and B (citizenship activity). We need more definition. We should probably add economic development or job creation to the list.
- Stewardship activities include service learning in classes and initiative learning experience with non-profit entities; D (co-curricular service to the community) includes student services activities.

### Should this be a core element of NKU's mission?

- Yes (from audience)
- It is a strength or an asset to the university to keep a broad view/approach to public engagement.

### Does NKU provide institutional support for public engagement?

- Does institutional support mean doing it on work time or provide funding to do it?
- We get pats on the back for doing it on your own time.
- Faculty is expected to be doing public engagement as a part of their job, but it is not as expected for staff or students.
- We need adequate professional training, travel to conferences, and scholarships around this topic.
- I think the university provides a lot of support in scholarship and in the classroom for this.
- We do a lot in the community. Our K-12 outreach is significant. From A&S, support is usually a "pat on the back." Institutional support is there for some activities but not for all.
- We receive a lot of encouragement for it, and it has become what we are known for, but for the RPT process, it is not well used. You just get a nod; yeah, we do it. I don't think it is weighted as strongly as we talk about it.
- Public engagement/service has been a part of the RPT process for seven years.
- I see a lot of outreach but often it is individualized when getting resources. It is not a collaborative effort, and that keeps resources limited. It is time we work on those efforts.
- I agree with her. I don't think our faculty workload takes this effort into the calculation. It takes faculty reassigned time to coordinate these efforts, but if it is given, it takes away from the SCH/FTE calculation. That may be the support issue for some departments.
- From the staff point of view, there is not a place included in the evaluation for staff to identify those activities. You must write it under the "other" comment section. Efforts are not readily available or recognized.
- (GM) If someone is interested in doing something, do you know who to go to for coordinating it?

- No. It would be beneficial to have an office that coordinated participation in public engagement, including a resource center where opportunities are posted and students who are interested in volunteering could go.
- The Scripts Howard Center is a great resource for us to get opportunities in the non-profit community. I get a lot of requests from the community on where they should go to make a connection. So, there would be a lot of value in communicating what we do, plus letting external folks know where/who they should contact. A public face would be beneficial. We do planetarium shows on campus, experiment demonstrations, other activities. Our biggest constraint is the time issue for faculty.
- We have hundreds of scholarships awarded each year. Perhaps attaching a community service requirement to some of these would be beneficial. Marketing behind it could be effective.
- It would depend on the kind of involvement you create as to whether that could be effective. It could create a tremendous energy and opportunity that other student do not get to do. Eventually, it becomes an expected part of the scholarship award; it could be a great asset.

### **Does public engagement increase/improve student performance and retention?**

- We have a lot of these activities in our department. Students do feature stories for a neighborhood. This project is a real life example for students to learn about feature writing. It is a more effective way to teach, but it takes more time.
- Involvement in public engagement activities can result in future employment. Students realize the connection being out in the public.
- I've had 4-5,000 student hours that go through public engagement. Students get to see the science being applied and seek classes they may not have been interested in without that experience. They get to work with professionals in the field and they see the job opportunities. Undeclared majors see the connection. What they see in the classroom is applied to real life. It motivates students and contributes to retention and graduation.
- It provides for a sense of confidence and well-being that they may not have otherwise had in their lives.
- The challenge is making sure that there is a learning value for the student and not that someone (externally) just wants free labor. There's a fine line between using/abusing the student and providing learning opportunities.
- We (Scripts) field a lot of calls from non-profits. Our message is that if it has no learning value, it's not a part of our offering. That's not always an easy message to give to the non-profits.

### **A significant part of our undergraduate population are nontraditional students who are older and with work demands. How well do we serve that population?**

- That's an interesting question. I don't know that those students are particularly challenged with public engagement. We could look at NSSE results by age groups. I don't know of any other antidotal data.

- Many of our students work at Kroger's, for example, to pay the bills but that's not work experience in their field of study. That's why experience in the class is important. It is a real, valuable alternative.
- I think the nontraditional students drive the public engagement experience. They understand that it makes a difference right away. I encourage my students to get involved in their community right away.
- The excitement of older students with being in a public engagement activity will rub off on the younger students. It is good synergy and builds momentum.
- It is a three-legged stool, and public engagement is one leg. Experiential education is part of the whole and provides retention measures.
- Service learning pedagogy has worked well with nontraditional students. We have good antidotal evidence that it works well.
- When we make it an expectation as part of the work, they (nontraditional students) will rise to the challenge. They want to be seen as professionals.
- We feared that students would not choose the non-profit agencies and would pick a business (for public engagement) because of the connection to jobs, but I find that they rank equally. We tell them that they are stewards of their own communities. The reality of working with non-profits is transformational for our students. It changes them emotionally and spiritually. There are so many spillover benefits. We are raising community stewards for a lifetime.
- There is a lot of evidence that the durability of this works. We are instilling lifelong values.
- We are doing a lot over time to improve our image and a big part of that is what we have done to raise the public awareness about our community engagement activities.
- We are building a sense of appreciation of place. A lot of students don't have that community view at the regional/global level. It is a growth experience and positions a person with a "place" that is not accomplished any other way.
- (GM) Just from a return-on-investment financial aspect, efforts that improves retention are what we should invest in.
- Looking at the question on the slide (public engagement at NKU is more centered around academic activity, co-curricular activity, both, neither), maybe we just don't know what everyone else is doing. So many things are going on around here, and we don't have a clue.
- We need to set the stage for public engagement to happen in an effective and efficient manner. Professional development might be needed for PE 101 so that we have a clear understanding of what that is and how we can support it.
- (GM) My sense is that the university is well known among our peers for public engagement. People regularly say NKU has an impact on the community.
- I don't know that Highland Heights people feel that way.
- I would like to know ways that we could reinforce all the great work that we do.

### **Should we focus on a few areas or not?**

- We have been very responsive to the community. For instance, we addressed the issue of homeless kids. If we had been limiting our public engagement, we would not have been able to respond to this need.
- It would be easier to measure our progress with just a few key areas, but it would lose the impact and creativity that is there. If we were to limit our activities, I would worry about who is making those choices and why. What would be deciding factors?
- In a lot of things, we say focus, focus, focus. But in this, if we are going to be a comprehensive regional university, our strength lies in being broad rather than having a narrow strategy.
- We would run a risk of excluding others.
- If we have a variety of majors, we need to make sure there are a variety of activities for them.
- Not necessarily mutually exclusive.
- (GM) Should we have a vetting process to evaluate a potential civic engagement project?
- We want to foster innovation; we don't want to have to apply for it.
- (GM) what if it is a guidance process?
- A lot of that exists. It is affiliated with an academic program. There might be an implied vetting or guidance already.
- (GM) So, the preference is to provide guidance and support, not vetting or application.
- We did grants where you needed to be familiar with vision 2020 goals. 505 was a miniature version of it. That doesn't exclude other possibilities. Have a few key areas, but don't eliminate the ability to be agile.

### **Broad questions – what are the biggest opportunities that we are not serving? What are other universities doing? Other general comments?**

- Tulane is doing projects in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.
- Lots of people have an interest, but is a question of the manpower hours. Without cloning, how do we do more? You have to draw the line somewhere.
- Maybe we need to crow about our public engagement activities more and give the reasons we are here doing community work. We don't do that enough. Need more press releases.
- It's not about how we see our efforts; it's about how they (the community) see it.