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As Learning becomes Service to Justice:
A reflection on University of Notre Dame Efforts
to Institutionalize Service Learning and Academic
Community Engagement

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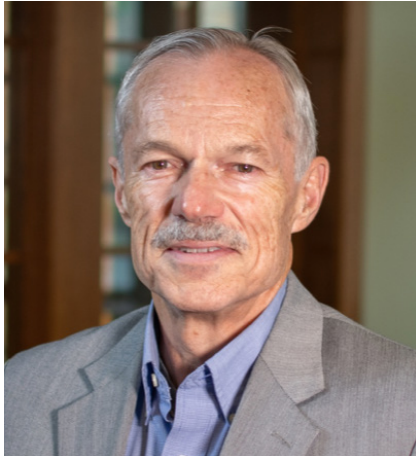
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5. AS LEARNING BECOMES SERVICE TO JUSTICE: A REFLECTION ON UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME EFFORTS TO INSTITUTIONALIZE SERVICE LEARNING AND ACADEMIC COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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Abstract

During its humble founding in 1842, Holy Cross priest Rev. Edward Sorin of France declared that the University of Notre Dame du Lac (Indiana, USA) “will be one of the most powerful means for doing good in this country.” Nearly 175 years later and now with a global view, the University maintains this commitment to the common good, with service-learning and academic community engagement playing a central role. Here we highlight how Notre Dame has addressed the challenge to be a moral force for good as it has grown into an international research university. After sharing historical turning points and examining the Holy Cross charism and social justice contexts that animate our efforts, we will focus on developments in the last decade designed to institutionalize service-learning and academic community engagement. With the goal of drawing on our situated experience to inform other institutions, we will employ two thematic categories to highlight institutional commitments that have been essential in our journey. The first category focuses on actors/structures, covering elements such as presidential leadership, the University’s Center for Social Concerns (CSC), other disciplinary institutes, and efforts across the University’s seven colleges. The second category describes key processes/strategies, such as service-learning efforts built around Catholic social teaching principles, financial support for community-based learning coordinators at local agencies, community-based research grants, a Faculty Institute to foster promising practices in engagement, and efforts among graduate students. We also describe attempts to build reciprocity with community partners, and examine our impacts, on both students and community metrics, through relevant research. Though such efforts have positioned service-learning and community engagement as vital contributors to the teaching and research missions at Notre Dame, we close with reflections about challenges along the way, resolving creative tensions, and our vision for future collaborations.

Introduction

Notre Dame's commitment to its founder's vision to be a force for good derives in no small part from the charism of the Congregation of Holy Cross that guides the University. As Notre Dame grew from a single building in 1842 to an internationally recognized research university with seven colleges and schools and over 10,000 students, it consistently found ways to educate both mind and heart and prepare "*citizens for society*" as well as "*citizens for heaven*" (Rev. Basil Moreau, C.S.C., Circular Letters 36, 1849). The Congregation's Mission (2.17) emphasizes—in language that resonates with community-based learning—the importance of crossing "borders of every sort," and that "*we must make ourselves at home among more than one people or culture, reminding us again that the farther we go in giving the more we stand to receive.*"

More than 175 years now removed from that founding, it is possible to look back throughout the University's history and trace a line of abiding commitment to service, engagement, teaching, and research for the common good. Here we focus on the University's more proximate history to illustrate how community engagement¹⁰ has become more pervasive and systematically engrained in the University's *ethos*. To highlight seminal developments in the journey toward institutionalization, we focus next on two thematic areas, *key actors and structures*, then *key enabling processes and strategies*.¹¹

Key Actors and Structures

Presidential Leadership

Presidential leadership can be an important factor in promoting engagement, especially if it is sustained and aligned with mission values (Gilliland, 2005). The three most recent presidents of Notre Dame have significantly animated commitments to social responsibility and public service. From 1952 to 1987, Fr. Theodore (Ted) Hesburgh, C.S.C., set an unparalleled vision and example, calling Notre Dame to "*be a crossroads where all the intellectual and moral currents of our times meet and are thoughtfully considered*" (Hesburgh, 1994, p. 10). Hesburgh (1980, n.p.) reasoned that "*All the education and professional training in the world is less effective if compassion does not enable it to get beyond the*

10 Throughout this work we use the term community engagement to encompass many forms of experiential and community-based learning and scholarship. Terms vary across academic disciplines, and we work with faculty to clarify and translate such. Here we focus primarily on engaged efforts directed toward social change and the common good.

11 Given space limitations, and with apologies to many excellent though unnamed colleagues, we are only able to provide examples vs. a thorough list.

problem directly to the person who is suffering. And if one can study all the subjects that our Christian colleges and universities offer and emerge without compassion for the personal suffering all around us in the world today, then we really have not lived up to the ideal that brought these institutions into being, the great dreams of their founders."

Fr. Edward "Monk" Malloy, C.S.C., picked up Fr. Hesburgh's mantle in 1987, adding a more local focus to Hesburgh's national and international vision. In *Beyond the Ivory Tower*, Malloy (1990, p. 28) argued that because a "commitment to social responsibility [...] can only be accomplished if students have come to grips in some organized way with the major issues of the day, social justice education is crucial and necessary for Catholic colleges and universities". Malloy recounted his own engaged learning journey as a student at Notre Dame, serving during summers in Mexico and Peru in the 1960s through CILA (the Council for the International Lay Apostolate), a Notre Dame student organization. Malloy described positive qualities of service-learning during an era before the term was used: "[T]he kinds of questions I took back to the classrooms of Notre Dame were radically different from those I was accustomed to asking. I began to have a real awareness of inequality, of inequitable distribution, of cultural discrimination, and of many other conditions I had read about in books and heard about in lectures, but which until then had not sunk in in quite the same way." Returning to Notre Dame decades later as its President gave Malloy the opportunity to enhance such engaged learning opportunities and grapple with curricular implications. Noting resistance among faculty to examine topics outside their major areas, especially if such can be labeled "soft", Malloy (p. 28)

Scholarly consideration of social justice must engage the very best minds, and that faculty who teach in this area full-time must be respected among their peers as teachers and scholars who can hold their own with anyone.

noted that "scholarly consideration of social justice must engage the very best minds, and that faculty who teach in this area full-time must be respected among their peers as teachers and scholars who can hold their own with anyone".

Fr. John Jenkins, C.S.C., the current University president, has continued to support engagement and service-learning efforts, expanding Father Sorin's initial vision. In his inaugural address, Jenkins called for Notre Dame to be "a great Catholic university for the 21st century, one of the pre-eminent research institutions in the world, a center for learning whose intellectual and religious traditions converge to make it a healing, unifying, enlightening force for a world deeply in need. This is our goal. Let no one ever again say that we dreamed too small." Accordingly, under

Fr. Jenkins' leadership since 2005, a host of engaged initiatives have taken root, as will be outlined below.

Notre Dame's sense of mission is enhanced by such leadership. And the University's formal mission statement, developed under Malloy and still active—provides a consistent call to action. It reads (in part): *“the University seeks to cultivate in its students not only an appreciation for the great achievements of human beings but also a disciplined sensibility to the poverty, injustice and oppression that burden the lives of so many. The aim is to create a sense of human solidarity and concern for the common good that will bear fruit as learning becomes service to justice.”* Similarly, the statement notes that *“The University is committed to constructive and critical engagement with the whole of human culture.”* When advocating University support for engagement, engagement leaders are quick to call to mind such mission values, or to quote Fr. Malloy (1990, p. 28): *“Administrators must thoroughly integrate social justice education into institutional priorities. This means structuring the common life to provide maximum opportunities for students and others to grapple in some organized way with the great issues. It means looking closely at both our sources and uses of funds. If social justice is used as a goal to interest people in the university, but if the money raised in that way is spent for other purposes, then our actions obviously are inconsistent with our stated mission”.*

The Center for Social Concerns

The University's Center for Social Concerns has been the flagship unit for institutionalizing service-learning and engagement since its founding in 1983. The Center began under Father Hesburgh, uniting the Volunteer Services Office (developed in the early 1970s) and the Center for Experiential Learning (of the late 1970s). The origin story here is worth telling, for it reflects both student involvement in designing engagement efforts—a best practice in service-learning—and early efforts to institutionalize engagement led by faculty. Given Notre Dame's *ethos*, many service initiatives existed on campus in the 1960s and 70s, including local tutoring, work with physically challenged individuals, and service to seniors. These and other student initiatives were supported by CILA, the Council for the International Lay Apostolate founded in 1961 by students animated by Vatican II who *“envisioned a lay movement of international Christian service”* working with Fr. Larry Murphy (Hawley, 1988, p. 2). CILA was the vehicle for the international summer service opportunities that Ed Malloy took part in as an undergraduate that grew into a signature initiative at the Center for Social Concerns (over 400 students participated in mostly international summer learning prior to the Center's opening). Father Don McNeil, C.S.C., became the faculty advisor to CILA in the 1970s as the organization grew and revised its work to

enhance local community service efforts as well. McNeill began to offer Theology courses integrating service and learning, helping to animate the initiatives of key student leaders. CILA raised significant funds to support its work, managed many volunteer efforts, and looked for ways to foster campus collaboration.

So, when a building was about to open on campus (which various entities sought to obtain), CILA officers, McNeil, and others went to Father Hesburgh to make their case. A vision for a Center for Social Concerns was developed via conversations among service organizations on campus, faculty and administrators, with students taking the lead in significant ways. According to Hawley (1987, p. 9), *“After describing the limitations imposed by the current fragmentation of the programs and organizations, the proposal called for the pooling of resources, sharing of ideas, more effective communication, and much greater visibility and interaction through the establishment of the Center for Social Concerns.”* Hesburgh was supportive in general, noting in subsequent years the persuasiveness of the students’ vision and their argument that what the University names as important should be reflected in its financial and physical resources. Yet he challenged those proposing the Center to develop further rationale, to examine how the Center would integrate with the academic curriculum, and to develop cost analyses. Over the following three years, the group met with University officers and the Board of Trustees, and performed a thorough inventory of student participation in service and related activities, the frequency of which surprised many, and served to reinforce the need for coordination across the institution (Hawley, 1987). In the spring of 1982, the evolved and updated proposal for the Center was approved by University officers. The Center would soon begin efforts to integrate and magnify engagement efforts on campus under the leadership of Don McNeill.

From its inception, the Center included social action initiatives to complement service pursuits in an effort to foster critical reflection on issues of social concern.

McNeill invited two people to help launch the Center: Judith Anne Beattie, C.S.C., former Director of the Office of Volunteer Services, to become the director for Service/Learning (with a slash), and Dr. Kathleen Maas Weigert, a sociologist and former Assistant Dean to serve as director for Social Analysis. The objective of the latter was to *“invite students, faculty, and alumni to study and explore contemporary ethical and moral issues from a variety of perspectives”* and to implement *“programs for faculty development [...] and social research”* (Hawley, 1987, pp. 15-16). Maas Weigert led efforts to work with a liaison in each college, enrich faculty immersion and training, and foster curricular innovations.¹²

12 For a more extensive history of the Center’s early years, see Hawley (1987), and Center for Social Concerns (2008): Living Witness.

The Center has grown from a staff/faculty of thirteen (many part-time) in 1983 to over 35 full-time at present. Many of the Center's signature programs have roots in early student-led initiatives. These include the a) Summer Service Learning Program through which approximately 250 students learn and serve for eight weeks in cities across the United States, actively supported by Notre Dame alumni clubs and sustained funding from a foundation developed by a member of the Board of Trustees, b) the International Summer Service Learning Program, which sends over 60 students annually to countries across the world, and c) Social Concerns Seminars, a set of approximately 20 experiential courses that address concerns ranging from rural poverty to civil rights through student immersion and analyses. Each of these programs are for-credit courses linked with a variety of academic departments across campus.

In addition, and beyond the scope of this article, the Center offers a mosaic of other engagement initiatives grounded in the principles of Catholic social teaching. Such include a) faculty consultation and training across the University (in promising practices in community engagement), b) research on the impacts of Notre Dame engagement on students and communities, c) programing on labor and workers rights, d) annual lectures/programs on themes of social action and justice, e) support for student career discernment and post-graduate service, f) leadership development initiatives, g) two academic minors (in Poverty Studies and Catholic Social Tradition), h) various international initiatives, including work to foster engagement at the University's global gateways h) civic education, i) advocacy training, and more. In such work the Center emphasizes reciprocal collaboration with colleagues across the University and local, national, and international partners. In many ways, the Center was and remains the chief entity on campus to promote and institutionalize engagement. And yet, at a research University with a broad mission to contribute, many other campus entities play a key role, especially in the last few decades, as we will outline.

Office of Public Affairs and EngageND

The Office of Public Affairs and Communications (reporting to the Office of the President) instituted two new positions with clear remit for community engagement activities: an Associate Vice President for Public Affairs in 2009, and a Director of Community Engagement in 2010. Collectively, these roles created a hub for partnerships with local and regional communities. The Office of Public Affairs organizes a regular economic impact report, is the point of contact for local government and educational partners, is a long-term partner in neighborhood revitalization efforts and oversees the University's Robinson Community Learning Center (began in 2001 through the Center for Social Concerns). The Office also

Engaged faculty, staff, and students can now share projects with each other, examine areas of strength and weakness, and maximize resources for impact. EngageND has also been useful for documenting engagement in its myriad forms for report development and communication.

sought campus support and expertise to build a community engagement database called EngageND. The University developed this unique internal application in 2012 to enhance metrics, avoid duplication of outreach activity, and invest resources effectively. Engaged faculty, staff, and students can now share

projects with each other, examine areas of strength and weakness, and maximize resources for impact. EngageND has also been useful for documenting engagement in its myriad forms for report development and communication.

Community Engagement Coordinating Council

As the previous section outlined, the Center for Social Concerns was and is a strong center of gravity for community engagement and service-learning efforts. There was not, however, a formal University-wide, cross-sectional body of individuals concerned with integrating community engagement writ large until the formation of the Community Engagement Coordinating Council (CECC). The CECC came about after two leaders, an Associate Provost and the Vice President of Public Affairs and Communications, in 2011 convened a Task Force on Community Engagement. The group held multiple working sessions, culminating in a Task Force Report (Lies, 2011) that cited several recommendations, chief among them being the creation of a council to be chaired by the Executive Director of the Center for Social Concerns and comprised of key representatives from the colleges, academic institutes, the Office of Public Affairs, Student Affairs, Athletics and others who lead efforts in community engagement for Notre Dame.

The early years of the CECC were characterized by efforts to ground its mission and vision, build membership, and define key goals and objectives. The CECC has met quarterly since 2012. Its second and current Strategic Plan outlines four goal areas: a) Community-University Collaborations: Build and sustain active partnerships that are focused on effectively addressing areas of mutually beneficial interest; b) Faculty, Staff, and Student Development: Enhance and expand academic community engagement of faculty, staff, and students; c) Communication: Use creative strategies to more effectively communicate engagement opportunities and impacts with internal and external audiences; d) Infra-

structure: Deepen and expand University infrastructure to support and coordinate academic community engagement. The Council is chaired by the Director of Academic Community Engagement who fosters community-engaged scholarship through the Office of the Provost.

Director of Academic Community Engagement

The Task Force report that recommended the formation of the CECC also suggested the creation of a specific role dedicated fully to *academic* community engagement. Benchmarking of other institutions indicated that many were housing such positions in the provost's office or similar academic units. The Task Force thus made a long-range recommendation for "...the expansion or strategic reorganization of the Provost's Office to include an Associate Provost for Academic Community Engagement or, minimally, a strategic reorganization of current responsibilities, so that academic community engagement becomes one among several other key assignments of a given associate provost" (Lies, 2011, p. 3). The near-term recommendation/request was for a part-time faculty appointment to provide leadership, vision, and support for the efforts of the CECC.

With the approval of Provost Thomas Burish, a part-time role was created—similar to a fellowship—with the title Director of Academic Community Engagement (DACE). Such was formally announced in the fall of 2013. This chapter's second author served as the inaugural DACE, from 2013 through 2015. Professor Mary Beckman served a two-year term as DACE through 2018, when the first author became the current DACE. While each DACE spearheads a variety of timely objectives, the following list illustrates the position's responsibilities: a) cultivate membership, set agenda, and facilitate meetings of the Community Engagement Coordinating Council, b) lead relevant assessments and campus inventories (e.g., the Carnegie Community Engagement Elective Classification application), c) facilitate collaboration across academic entities with respect to engagement initiatives, d) promote training for members and campus constituencies, host engagement scholars for campus presentations, and facilitate links to national organizations, and e) manage relevant DACE/CECC funding. Recently, the Office of the Provost has increased its budgetary support of DACE initiatives and the CECC.

Other University Institutes and Centers

Centers and institutes—as organizational structures in higher education—often exist at the interface of departments and disciplines. These boundary spanning units provide fer-

tile ground for interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary connection, offering opportunities for graduate students, faculty, and external stakeholders to collaborate in innovative ways. It is the case that the academic ecosystem at Notre Dame has been receptive to—perhaps even encouraging of—centers and institutes as vehicles for community engagement. Though there are too many instances to provide a complete list, three are provided for consideration.

First, the Center for Civic Innovation—within the College of Engineering—conducts sustained research projects integrating community-identified needs with the skills of Notre Dame faculty and students. Second, the Institute for Educational Initiatives, home to the Alliance for Catholic Education, brings an interdisciplinary approach to teaching, scholarship, and service aimed at improving K-12 education nationally and globally. Third, the Keough School of Global Affairs—which integrates the Kellogg Institute for International Studies, the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies and other centers fosters an interdisciplinary focus on peace, conflict resolution, democracy, human rights and global development through an applied orientation (toward both policy and practice). Again, these examples are meant to be emblematic of the myriad ways that centers and institutes, co-existing alongside a robust departmental/disciplinary approach to engagement, can amplify an institution’s capacity and breadth of external engagement.¹³

Key Enabling Processes and Strategies

As engagement efforts have deepened and concretized, we’ve been able to test and reflect upon certain enabling processes and strategies, some drawn from conceptual frameworks or promising practices at other institutions but many germane to our own *ethos* and experimentation. Upon reflection, we believe the following strategies have empowered and improved our engagement efforts.

Service-Learning in the Context of Catholic Social Teaching: Beyond the Hyphen

The Center for Social Concerns implemented service-learning initiatives (using a slash: Service/Learning) before the term was common in higher education, consistently advocating that such work be developed with reciprocity and grounded in faith. “Central to this process”—according to the Center’s (1997) mission statement—“*is enhancing the spiritual and intellectual awareness of students, faculty, staff, and alumni/ae about today’s com-*

13 A full list of University centers and institutes, most of which foster engagement initiatives, is available here: <https://www.nd.edu/academics/centers-and-institutes/>

plex social realities, calling us all to service and action for a more just and humane world." As such, the Center's understanding of service-learning parallels that described by Maria Nieves Tapia (2020; see also CLAYSS in Latin America) in emphasizing encounter and solidarity. Thus, the Center's signature efforts (e.g., national and global summer programs, and a new McNeill Fellowship) place students in sustained contact with those experiencing the challenges of poverty or injustice where relationships (kinship) can be built and reflection integrated. Throughout its work, the Center attempts to foster or enact the principles of Catholic social tradition (CST), including a focus on human dignity, the common good, the option for the poor, the intersection of rights and responsibilities, subsidiarity, and stewardship of creation. The Center believes that authentic encounter with those on the margins is essential to understanding complex challenges and bringing about solutions that move beyond the *statu quo*.

The Center attempts to frame its educational initiatives within a developmental framework grounded in moral theory (see Brandenberger, 2005), identifying resonant learning goals that integrate with University learning objectives. And it has supported longitudinal research on the impact of engaged learning on student development and identifying promising practices for the field (see for example, Bowman *et al.*, 2010, and Hill *et al.*, 2010).

Community-Engaged Learning Coordinators

On a local level, the University has supported for over two decades Community Engaged Learning Coordinators (CELCs, previously community-based learning coordinators) within agencies that host Notre Dame students. If we believe that service—and community-based learning enhance academic learning (which studies both at Notre Dame and beyond confirm), we cannot in fairness ask our community partners to bear that responsibility alone (and services provided by students are not uniformly effective or beneficial to the agency or group, even if students are learning). The Center for Social Concerns has thus offered partial salary support for CELC positions housed at key partner agencies, and hosted ongoing dialogues to learn with the CELCs how best to develop reciprocally supportive practices (for a history and conceptualization of these positions, see Snyder Mick, Cahill Kelly, & Centellas, 2018).

Engaged Scholarship and Community-Based Research Grants

Forms of engaged scholarship are also important at Notre Dame, building on efforts of faculty and graduate students to apply disciplinary efforts to social challenges. Often

such efforts begin with the vision of a particular faculty member willing to stretch beyond historical ivory-tower assumptions. Yet to catalyze and sustain the integration of faculty, students, and partners an institution must signal the importance of such and offer support in various forms. Community Impact Grants offered for more than a decade by the Center for Social Concerns are one such means, building on efforts to enhance the field of community-based research led by Center for Social Concerns faculty member Mary Beckman noted below.

The Bowman Creek Educational Ecosystem (BCe2) began through humble efforts, but with support of the CECC, the College of Engineering, and others it grew into a signature project featured in the *Stanford Innovation Review*. And BCe2 provided a working platform for the development at Notre Dame of the Center for Civic Engagement (described earlier), which plays a key role in fostering local and regional research partnerships addressing issues such as manufacturing, health care, and data infrastructure. Across colleges and schools, similar efforts are underway to promote forms of engaged or public scholarship that has the potential to channel research and knowledge building strengths of the University toward community ends.

A University video series named *What would you fight for?* provides unique support for engaged scholarship, showcasing “the work, scholarly achievements, and global impact of Notre Dame faculty, students, and alumni.” Over 90 of these two-minute segments have aired nationally since 2007, demonstrating seasoned faculty members partnering to address various social challenges: global poverty, racial injustice, health disparities, homelessness, political misinformation, equal access to the arts, and many more. Although not developed by engagement leaders on campus, each video portrays faculty partnerships with graduate/undergraduate students and community leaders. While presence in such a video may not “count” in the faculty tenure process, the videos consistently emphasize Notre Dame’s mission to be a force for good in the world.

Community Engagement Faculty Institute and Graduate Student Efforts

To enhance faculty awareness and skills with respect to engaged scholarship, the University offers through the Center for Social Concerns an annual three-day Community Engagement Faculty Institute, a series of Engaged Learning Forums, as well as direct course-building consultation with faculty. To mark for students which courses have engaged components (now over 100 annually), the University Registrar developed an attribute (ZCSC) entered into course descriptions and tracked by the Office of Strategic Planning and Institutional Research.

Graduate students play a key role in the life of an institution, and carry forward teaching and research strategies within the academy. Thus the Center for Social Concerns has developed a series of graduate student initiatives, including a Graduate Certificate in Community Engagement and Public Scholarship and a Graduate Fellowship. Graduate students also offer courses via the Center, and are eligible for community impact research grants.

Carnegie Community Engagement Classification

Internal assessment of progress is an important element of this work. An opportunity for such in the United States (and perhaps in the future in other countries) is the Carnegie Foundation Community Engagement Classification. The Carnegie Foundation describes community engagement as “*collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.*” Since 2006, this elective, voluntary classification (organized by a national review panel) assesses institutional commitment to community-campus partnerships and engagement.

While external validation is welcome, Notre Dame pursued this designation (successfully) in 2010 and 2020 in large part as a means to examine the breadth and quality of our engagement efforts. The classification process demands that each institution provide documentation, evidence, and a candid assessment of strengths and weaknesses regarding community engagement. In 2020 we assembled a representative task force (invited by both the University President and Provost) to examine the required elements: institutional mission, identity and commitments, curricular engagement, outreach, and partnerships.

We learned a great deal through the compilation and sifting of evidence, noticing strengths, gaps, and opportunities. Further, the application process fosters an awareness-raising function across campus, prompting salient conversations with deans, department chairs, vice presidents, and other leaders. We compiled in 2020 a 20-page Executive Summary of Notre Dame’s application to share our learnings (the summary outlines many of the initiatives we did not have space to outline in this work).

Community Needs and Impact: Assessment and Measurement

Best practices in community engagement emphasize the importance of beginning with community input, systematically identifying community needs, and maintaining an engagement posture that prioritizes community priorities and impact rather

Best practices in community engagement emphasize the importance of beginning with community input, systematically identifying community needs, and maintaining an engagement posture that prioritizes community priorities and impact rather than applauding university outputs

than applauding university outputs (e.g., the number of students placed or courses offered). This is a high bar to reach, worthy of sustained attention and critical self-appraisal. Here we share two attempts to foster assessment that is informed by broad, reciprocal input.

In 2015, a working group derived from the Community Engagement Coordinating Council took on the task of assessing the local community's perception of Notre Dame's engagement efforts. A few key highlights important to that process are highlighted here. First, community assessments benefit from broad but strategic representation in the design of the process. We sought cross-university membership as well as representatives from a local health system and a director from the local mayor's office. A variety of survey approaches and designs were vetted before deciding to partner with a local company offering proprietary survey software and methods. We hoped this approach (which incorporated focus groups and open-ended qualitative items) would identify deep community needs and establish a baseline for assessment. We identified three core areas to examine: economic development, preK–12 education, and service-learning. Finally, we worked to frame the assessment with a bias toward action. Thus the University's final Report on the Community's Perception of Notre Dame's Engagement Activity identified three ensuing opportunities and a set of internal and external next steps.

The work of Mary Beckman—a faculty member at the Center for Social Concerns who also served as Director of Academic Community Development in the Office of the Pro-

According to Beckman and Wood (2016), research in the field is often limited to student development outcomes or short-term outputs. They advocated a model that gives priority to community impact, defined as “a community's improved well-being or community development” (p. 35) over the medium or long term.

vost at Notre Dame—points to the importance of conceiving of engaged research as a collective process directed toward impact. Beckman facilitated a variety of engaged research initiatives, and wrote with colleagues a seminal work (Beckman & Long, 2016) on best practices in community-based research. Accord-

ing to Beckman and Wood (2016), research in the field is often limited to student development outcomes or short-term outputs. They advocated a model that gives priority to community impact, defined as “*a community’s improved well-being or community development*” (p. 35) over the medium or long term. Thinking about impact—for example, how may our educational initiatives contribute to literacy—has the power to improve near-term goal-setting and strategy development, and to simultaneously enliven/amplify the engagement of students and faculty. Beckman and Wood also called for a focus on collective impact rather than an isolated approach across discrete initiatives which do not have the efficacy to solve complex challenges. Their proposed framework thus calls for networking, coalition building, and sustained commitment among higher education faculty as well as students and community agents, going beyond brief, single-semester models of engagement. These models were employed, at least to some extent, in various local projects, including the Bowman Creek Educational Ecosystem, the development of a food coalition in South Bend, and efforts to improve youth education via a university-community research initiative.

Moment to See, Courage to Act: Strategic Planning for the Next Decade

Occasionally, high-level university initiatives backed by senior leaders have the potential to advance community engaged commitments in significant ways. One such example is currently unfolding at the University of Notre Dame, referred to as Moment to See, Courage to Act (MSCA)¹⁴. As Provost Marie Lynn Miranda wrote to the entire campus community: “*We have a moment to see—to reflect, to learn, and to become better as individuals and stronger as a University because of those challenges. If we’re going to do that, we have to do more than see. We need the courage to act—to chart a new, deliberate, and ambitious course.*” The first phase of MSCA featured campus-wide faculty discussion groups in guided conversations about the impact of the pandemic and how the University is called to respond. Phase two highlighted the research, teaching, and scholarship of individual faculty members via three-minute lightning talks, modeling a way to see across the University potentials for innovative collaboration and contribution. Phase three charged faculty to come together in teams to address the core question: What big endeavors should Notre Dame undertake? Miranda called upon faculty to identify critical research (basic or applied), educational, and engagement opportunities and grand challenges for

14 The initiative draws its name in part from Pope Francis’ call (Von Braun, 2020) to respond to current challenges posed by the pandemic as a “moment to see the poor”, and draws from the Holy Cross mission statement: “The mission is not simple, for the impoverishments we would relieve are not simple. There are networks of privilege, prejudice and power so commonplace that often neither oppressors nor victims are aware of them. We must be aware and also understanding by reason of fellowship with the impoverished and by reason of patient learning. For the kingdom to come in this world, disciples must have the competence to see and the courage to act” (Congregation of the Holy Cross, 2.14).

21st century higher education. The ideas that surface—and the faculty champions that give them potential—will inform and guide the University's next strategic framework, offering a roadmap for the next decade. Given the express call to generate ideas that call for action and application, MSCA is poised to advance institutional commitments to engagement in various forms.

Challenges and Creative Tensions

As on any campus, the development of engagement efforts at Notre Dame has not followed a linear blueprint. There have been iterations and trials along the way. Here we outline a few challenges experienced and our approach (or emergent insight) to address each creatively. Some of the challenges noted are germane to managing the scope and scale of an international research university.

Faith-Based Vision and Secular Frameworks: Finding Common Purposes

As a Catholic institution, Notre Dame does not apologize for its orientation to questions of faith, and champions the intersection of faith and reason in a search for truth. Yet faculty, staff, and students are welcomed from diverse backgrounds, and are influenced by the press of secular assumptions and frameworks. It is indeed a creative tension to explore such intersections, and community engagement efforts can provide a fruitful means for authentic encounter and mutual understanding that can enrich individual spirituality and collective wisdom. The challenge is to do so without resorting to vague relativism or overt control. The Catholic social tradition is one means to address this creative tension, for the principles inherent to such (e.g., solidarity, the common good, climate stewardship) often mirror those in other faith traditions and appeal to those of secular orientation. The

Indeed, we have found that student participants in service-learning report enhanced spiritual openness and growth even when such was not their goal

university setting provides an important means to add reflection and support to the raw elements of experience to foster developmental understanding. Indeed, we have found that student participants in service-learning re-

port enhanced spiritual openness and growth even when such was not their goal (see Brandenberger & Bowman, 2012).

The first author (Brandenberger, 2020) has argued that for a university to flourish, it needs more than a respected faculty, competent students, and sufficient funding. Just as an individual needs to be part of something larger to thrive (consistent with both ancient wisdom and modern research), a university must have a social purpose (or *social horizon*, as Ellacuria, 1991, posited), one that can unite and animate efforts to contribute in mutually meaningful ways. We strive to build such purpose(s) at Notre Dame, integrating our Catholic calling in collaboration with persons of good will across multiple communities.

Faculty Reward Structures

While many faculty at Notre Dame are attracted by the mission of the University, paradigms that undergird faculty expectations and training across disciplines pose a challenge for engagement, as many scholars have noted (O'Meara, 2011). Criteria for what constitutes faculty success (e.g., journal articles in the social sciences, a book in the humanities) often prioritize elements that are individualistic and isolated versus collective and applied. Such assumptions are slow to change, even as the academy seems to move out of the ivory tower toward relevance and impact, spurred by financial and cultural challenges and new digital technologies. When in 2009 the Carnegie application asked about support for community engagement in the tenure process, our University response was perhaps perceived as thin or rhetorical (compared to a land-grant institution, for example, which often can specify how engagement and outreach factor into faculty advancement). Responding to the same question in 2019, we had more to say: some changes in the Academic Articles of the University, and the creation of new faculty lines/positions supportive of engagement. Still, there are challenges: faculty are keen observers of what counts toward promotion, especially early in their tenure careers. Efforts to address such concerns include consultation with faculty, inviting national speakers to campus to showcase how other universities are addressing tenure concerns, and participation in relevant national associations (e.g., The Research University Civic Engagement Network).

Epistemological Frameworks

A related challenge can be the perceived tension between academic excellence and social mission. The research and teaching functions within the academy are taken as central, with outreach, engagement, or extension understood as a less rigorous “third pillar” (Nieves Tapia, 2020). But can (or should) academic excellence be an end in itself? Nieves Tapia (2020, p. 18)

argued that some universities understand “*that all that research, all that search for knowledge, all that academic production, only makes sense if it makes sense for our people*” (emphasis added by current authors). If we accept this premise, consistent with Catholic social teaching, that our efforts should prioritize human solidarity and the common good, then we cannot separate academic excellence from mission, but see the former as an important or best tool (Nieves Tapia, 2020) to address the latter in a unified, reciprocal manner. We need to move beyond a bifurcated understanding of basic vs. applied knowledge. Today’s knowledge for knowledge’s sake will often become tomorrow’s practical solution. The work of Jesuit Ignacio Ellacuria (1982, 1991), writing from a university perspective during war in El Salvador, is instructive. Ellacuria argued that a university needs to integrate its two key functions: development of the intellect and awareness of social realities. Such cannot be built simply on the personal interests of faculty and students (Ellacuria, 1991). He advocated critical engagement with historical realities toward “*knowing what is being done and what should be done in a unity of consciousness*” (1991, p. 184), and taking an ethical stance (with caution not to devolve to a unilateral or political perspective). He asks: “*What then does a university do, immersed in this reality? Transform it? Yes. Do everything possible so that liberty is victorious over oppression, justice over injustice, love over hate? Yes. Without this overall commitment, we would not be a university*” (1982, n.p.).

Some may challenge this stance, believing a university should be about the transfer of content knowledge. But the concepts of justice resonate within Notre Dame’s *ethos* and Catholic mission. We believe that University priorities must be primarily directed toward social purposes and the improvement of human life. At its core, the University of Notre Dame seems to understand this, but external disciplinary guardrails, status concerns, and pressure of scholarly production slow change. Helpful strategies may include dialogue about academic ends and means, consideration of epistemic change within and beyond the academy, and interdisciplinary

We believe that University priorities must be primarily directed toward social purposes and the improvement of human life.

collective visioning of faculty-led strategic initiatives. A recent addition of community engaged scholarship opportunities on the Office of the Provost website is a welcomed development.

From Outreach to Justice: Learning from the Margins

As a research university moves toward institutionalizing engagement, project and program goals may move away from the margins, so to speak, to less controversial is-

Here, then is work for the academy: to operationalize the rich yet complex principles of CST in a manner that is reciprocally responsive to human needs. Such presents no small task. It will require grounded listening, collective vision, and courage to act.

and students raise issues of racial justice, voting rights, or equal access. How do we remain, especially at an institution of high resource and privilege, sufficiently on the margins, open to the experience of those who bear the weight of poverty or injustice? The Center for Social Concerns at Notre Dame has addressed such challenges since its inception, and provides rich resources¹⁵ in the Catholic social tradition to support efforts. Even formal Catholic social teaching, however, is much more likely to name the *importance* of applying CST principles than to outline *how* such principles can/should be lived out (Bergman, 2011).¹⁶ Here, then is work for the academy: to operationalize the rich yet complex principles of CST in a manner that is reciprocally responsive to human needs. Such presents no small task. It will require grounded listening, collective vision, and courage to act. Universities seem at times to be hard-wired to describe (to name, catalog, and map) more than to take action. But the current moment demands action, and justice—highlighted in Notre Dame’s mission and University-wide documents—

Our efforts will be ineffective, misdirective, or do harm if not grounded in community dialogue at every level. Notre Dame has strong positive impulses to do the right thing in this regard, but needs to sustain critical self-reflection. An important framework to guide our efforts here is that of epistemic justice (Fricker, 2017). We must ensure that all voices are welcome at the table of knowledge creation.

sues (perhaps food donation or home renovation vs. economic justice). Such may be especially challenging as the academy attempts to define its appropriate role in a post-truth or polarized political atmosphere. Donors may become unsettled if faculty

cannot be a tepid aspiration: it places demands on our work and lives. We can take heart that the journey will be meaningful and will enhance learning. “We need to learn much more to transform reality than to diagnose and describe it,” noted Nieves Tapia (2020, p. 31): “diagnoses become meaningful as starting points for action, and helps us to realise the social mission of the uni-

15 See *The Welcome Table: An Introduction to CST*

16 Roger Bergman counted over 600 references in Catholic social encyclicals emphasizing the importance of the CST principles, but only a page pointing to how such principles might be taught or learned.

versity, so that everything we research and study is translated into alternatives, into solutions at the service of our brothers and sisters" (p. 24).

Our efforts will be ineffective, misdirective, or do harm if not grounded in community dialogue at every level. Notre Dame has strong positive impulses to do the right thing in this regard, but needs to sustain critical self-reflection. An important framework to guide our efforts here is that of epistemic justice (Fricker, 2017). We must ensure that all voices are welcome at the table of knowledge creation.

The University as Anchoring Institution: Coordination and Impact at Large Scale

It takes some institutional humility and deference to community wisdom for the university to take on the role that is best suited to yielding the greatest outcomes for all partners.

Notre Dame is a salient actor and employer in its region, raising associated opportunities and challenges. The work of Hodges and Dubb (2012) examines how universities may serve as anchor institutions in

their communities. Across an array of community partnerships, universities must negotiate positionality in each *particular* engagement opportunity. When planning and engaging, the university may serve as facilitator, leader, or convener depending on context. The creative tension lies in adeptly assessing how the academy can best engage its talents and resources while listening reciprocally to community needs. Doing so takes institutional self-awareness and respect for knowledge that comes from beyond university walls. It takes some institutional humility and deference to community wisdom for the university to take on the role that is best suited to yielding the greatest outcomes for all partners.

A related challenge at a large scale university revolves upon coordination and communication. How may campus units manage partnerships in ways that avoid overtaxing community entities? Are there mechanisms in place to avoid duplication of efforts? Is a centralized or dispersed model of engagement most effective: to what entity do faculty and partners go for training, consultation, and potential funding? The tension lies in balancing the enthusiasm and creativity of academic units—and individual scholars—while making sure that University efforts are not uncoordinated or working at cross purposes. Addressing this tension at Notre Dame led to the development of the Community Engagement Coordinating Council. The hope is to foster connective tissue across engagement activity, keeping all stakeholders informed about possible overlaps, emerging opportunities, and synergistic connections.

Similarly, cultivating a long-term orientation to specified community outcomes—rather than University inputs—remains a creative tension. Project deliverables, short funding cycles, expected grant outputs, and quarterly benchmarks point to the importance of “production,” of showing that well-intentioned efforts are producing results. It remains the case, however, that community engaged work can be overly fixated on the short term. It takes intentional effort to identify indicators of long-term impact and sustain a commitment to measure them with fidelity. Such is a current and ongoing goal.

Summary: Lessons Learned and Paths Ahead

We conclude with ten (briefly stated) lessons learned along the way, with an eye toward future potentials:

1. Capitalize on institutional strengths and identities (an institution’s unique charism) rather than applying engagement practices built in other contexts. When practices from other institutions are adopted, modify to fit the local *ethos*. Embrace the distinctive elements of the institution and find ways that these traits are manifest in engaged work.
2. Understand the roots of one’s institutional mission in the context of social and ethical responsibility. Champion mission statements and other calls for contributions to the public good, asking how are we progressing? Foster a sense of collective purpose.
3. Begin where there is energy and commitment, but look for means to scale intentionally toward signature projects and sustained efforts that may go beyond individual faculty initiatives. This suggests being patient but nimble enough to seize opportunity when it arises.
4. Much can be accomplished through developing a campus *ethos* of outreach and responsibility, but the next level of institutionalization is to ensure that important work is fostered intentionally with a long-range vision.
5. Work to integrate engagement objectives into strategic plans across departments/colleges, and highlight the developmental outcomes of engagement in learning objectives and research plans.
6. Address epistemological assumptions of faculty and students, working to build epistemic understanding of, respect for, and access to diverse ways of knowing.

7. Avoid separating academic excellence and mission. Foster university commitment and action amid relativism and doubt, moving beyond the tendency to seek full understanding before action. Learn from working to solve wicked problems.

8. Assess for impact. Welcome the complexities and benefits of long-term assessments that have the potential to yield deep insights and institutional wisdom.

9. Respond to the current moment, to disparities laid bare by the COVID pandemic, current political divisions, racial justice concerns, climate change, and similar justice concerns that warrant our best efforts within and beyond the academy.

10. At every opportunity, foreground the fact that a university and its surrounding community live in tight symbiosis with one another, making their success or failure tightly linked. Higher education institutions must partner with local leaders on macro-level quality of life issues, such as safety, education, and economic development in order to foster the region's full potential.

We hope leaders at other institutions may be drawn into examining those distinct elements of mission, vision, and partnership that are seminal to their own work in a journey toward engagement that is both pervasive and deep.

Part of what makes a reflective journey worthwhile is the opportunity to look back—to examine roads taken and detours encountered. This chapter afforded an opportunity for institutional reflection about efforts at Notre Dame. We hope leaders at

other institutions may be drawn into examining those distinct elements of mission, vision, and partnership that are seminal to their own work in a journey toward engagement that is both pervasive and deep.

Each college and university has unique gifts to offer through engagement. We welcome collaboration in this work. Indeed, sustained collaboration across colleges/universities in a region or beyond has the potential to facilitate impactful social change toward the common good.

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Uniservitate is a global programme for the promotion of service-learning in Catholic Higher Education. Its objective is to generate a systemic change in Catholic Higher Education Institutions (CHEIs) through the institutionalisation of service-learning (SL) as a tool to achieve its mission of offering an integral education and training of agents of change committed to their community.

“We will not change the world, if we do not change education”

Pope Francis

4 Institutionalization of Service-Learning in Higher Education

This work aims to discover and highlight all the wealth within the perspectives of the different actors participating in the institutionalization processes of service-learning in Higher Education. Through the description of various global cases of service-learning institutionalization, the book presents reflections, actions and experiences that outline conceptual elements and key features, seeking to contribute to the great global debate on how and to which purpose processes allowing for the integration of service-learning into the identity and culture of Higher Education institutions are launched and developed.

We introduce this fourth volume of the Uniservitate collection with the firm intention of allowing readers to experience, through its pages, a journey across the different continents and cultures, exploring stories as diverse as the contexts and actors behind them, and to take on the challenges and dreams that we believe the book suggests, with a forward-looking approach, for those interested in a Higher Education that is more engaged with the world in which it unfolds its actions.

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