Redefining Excellence

A Strategic Policy Platform for Victorian Higher Education and Community Engagement

The University of Queensland Community Service and Research Centre
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Preface

Acknowledgements

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Intellectual Property

The UQ Community Service and Research Centre recognises that The University of Queensland’s Community Service and Research Centre and the Victorian Department of Education, Employment and Training own the intellectual property generated during and from this project.

Confidentiality

The data collected during the course of this research remains confidential in recognition of privacy laws and ethical research practices.

Disclaimer

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Section 1: Overview

Executive Summary

This report provides a current overview and analysis of the role of universities in local community development in the State of Victoria. Drawing on successful programs of community engagement in Victoria, Australia, Europe, Africa, and North America, the report proposes policy strategies for fostering community development for Victorian Higher Education through effective community engagement programs.

Universities have been a perennial force for the development and maintenance of civil societies throughout the developed world. A significant part of the university’s role in has been the enrichment of social well-being through active engagement with its local community. The two underpinning assumptions of this report are that universities have a civic responsibility to enhance the well-being of their communities, and that acting upon this responsibility will mutually benefit universities and their communities, generating long-term social, civic, and economic benefits.

The key policy recommendations of the report are tied to the way community engagement programs are funded. However, it is clear that funding alone cannot and will not improve the effectiveness of community engagement programs. The meaning of excellence within university cultures needs to be broadened so that academics and universities can be formally acknowledged for the clear benefits that effective community engagement projects deliver.

Consequently, the central long-term policy strategy recommended here is oriented towards funding mechanisms that promote community oriented conceptions of excellence among academics and university administrations, and which give excellent community engagement outcomes equivalent weighting as currently entrenched measures of academic excellence. The category of “academic excellence” typically refers to research, teaching, and scholarly dissemination of knowledge. Such activities are undoubtedly central to the healthy functioning of universities, but equally so is excellence in our universities’ civic engagements. But as long as definition of excellence...
remains defined by funding regimes in current terms, community engagement outcomes will be less attractive for scholars and universities alike.

A culture of “publish or perish” continues to prevail in universities, while service to the community goes largely unrewarded in respect of career advancement for scholars and for funding universities. This imbalance in funding priorities hinders the development of longer-term benefits which flow from effective community engagement programs, despite evidence that they have proven to be greatly beneficial.

It is therefore the conclusion of this report that community engagement outcomes can only be sustained over the longer term if the achievement of excellence in community engagement is encouraged by funding structures which reward such activities to the same degree as currently entrenched conceptions of academic excellence.

Conceptual Framework

Scholarly excellence: The practical definition of scholarly excellence, according to which universities are ranked and funded, is undoubtedly the most influential factor shaping the attitudes and actions of scholars, university administrations, and policy makers. The recent discussion paper by the Federal Minister for Education, *Varieties of Excellence*, is exemplary in this respect. It succinctly defines the scope of excellence for universities: ‘All higher education institutions should aspire to excellence in teaching, learning, and scholarship’ (p. 21). Excellence in these areas is essential to universities. Related performance indicators, such as enrolment numbers, scholarly dissemination of knowledge, successful research grant development, and outcomes for student are the basis upon which universities are funded, scholars acknowledged, programs promoted, and whole-of-system policy approaches towards higher education are formed. Regardless of the university, its

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**BEST PRACTICE MODEL 2**

The San Francisco Urban Institute
San Francisco State University, USA

The San Francisco Urban Institute (SFUI) is a non-profit research and action project of San Francisco State University. Our purpose is to bring together resources from both the university and the community to address the most critical issues of San Francisco and the Bay Area: economic development, workforce preparation, urban environmental restoration, inner-city education and health, business and community development.

SFUI offers capacity building, specialized technical assistance, research, and university coursework while striving to create an urban environment that supports long-term economic stability. SFUI projects are designed to keep at-risk students in school, attract minority students to the university, create jobs, assist with job training, address health care needs, promote peaceful resolutions to conflicts that stem from race relations and housing issues, foster gender equity in education and the workforce, and restore the environment.

**STRAATEGIES**

The Institute’s core strategy is to build collaborative projects that bridge the university to community-based organizations, businesses, labor, and city agencies. It utilizes a research and action approach for understanding and improving the urban environment.

SFUI establishes an architecture for success by designing and developing interactive programs, community collaborations, and campus affiliations that facilitate an intellectual exchange of information and ideas among Bay Area school districts, labor unions, businesses, and local, state, and federal agencies. They sponsor a wide range of programs and projects in fields as diverse as the university’s intellectual range. In addition, they engage faculty and students in their initiatives, and are a recognized participant in many of the city’s most innovative approaches to urban problems.

SFUI should not be considered to be just a “think tank,” but an “action tank,” and thus expresses the best traditions of an urban university that is long noted for its applied research, and service to its city and region.

**HISTORY & DEVELOPMENT**

The institute was founded in 1992 by a coalition of university and community leaders who began sponsoring a wide range of policy initiatives, collaborative projects and analytical studies.

In 1998, the initial year of a multi-year grant from the California State University (CSU) Chancellor’s office, SFUI funded 52 projects to create new coursework integrating community service. On behalf of the CSU system, the SFUI received a Rockefeller Foundation grant to produce a comprehensive report on the California economy and employment opportunities for individuals making transitions from public assistance under welfare reform.

In a continuing effort to make the intellectual and programmatic resources of the University more available and more useful to the community, the SFUI has generated more than $10,000,000 in external program funding to the university, involved faculty and students in its projects, become a recognized leader and participant in many of the city’s most innovative solutions to urban problems, and sponsored a wide range of projects in fields as diverse as the university’s intellectual spectrum.
locality, or its heritage, standard performance indicators of scholarly excellence provide an index of its worth. However, in terms of community engagement objectives, especially where regional and urban development outcomes are concerned, the usual measures of scholarly excellence are constraints and deterrents for scholars who might otherwise commit time to the development and renewal of their communities.

Community development activities are time consuming and not always amenable to the production of outcomes by which scholarly excellence is usually measured, such as scholarly publications, student enrolments, the development of prestigious grant applications, or entrepreneurial activities. Consequently, career prospects are limited for academics who commit substantial amounts of their time to community development and renewal. For identical reasons, such activities are low on the list of funding priorities for university administrations.

Yet there is unquestionably a central role for universities – whether regional or urban – in the well-being, development, and renewal of their communities. Indeed, social and civic well-being have long been recognised as primary purposes of the university. Therefore this report advocates policy solutions that recognise a more expansive definition of scholarly excellence, one which formally recognises excellence in community engagement outcomes, especially in the areas of community development and renewal.
Community engagement, community service, and community development: This report recognises the clear distinction between the one-way, paternalistic, and altruistic implications of the term community service and the mutually active implications of the term community engagement. Regardless of the vast resources and expertise base of universities, effective community development cannot be “done to” or “done for” a community. Effective community development requires mutual, deliberate, considered, and mutually engaged collaborations between communities and scholars. It requires the consent and desire of communities and the substantial, considered, and coordinated efforts of scholars who are engaged with the aspirations and potentials of their communities.

The “glocalized” university and scalable conceptions of community: Bauman (1998) coined the term ‘glocalization’ to highlight the tension between a mobile, globalised class of elites, and a localised, poverty-bound class of persons suffering social degradation. We use the term here somewhat differently in order to highlight the spatial duality of universities. Universities have their historical roots in specific places, nations, and cultures. Yet they are among the most globally connected, globally mobile class of institutions in the world. Universities are certainly among the beneficiaries of the emerging global culture and are most certainly a significant part of the global community. In Australia, universities have been the beneficiaries of public largesse for more than 150 years, and are quite clearly part of the national community. Yet they remain firmly embedded in localities, and are dependent upon local infrastructure, local affiliations, local industries, and local partnerships. In emerging policy discussions at the Federal level, there is a clear emphasis on ‘regionality’ where community development objectives are concerned (Nelson, 2002d, pp. 47-62). The University of Western Sydney notes that in the context of a global environment, ‘whether urban or rural’, a university has multiple communities, ‘ranging in scale and scope from local to regional to national to international’ (as cited in Nelson, 2002d, p. 49). The term community is meant here in a local sense as the immediate environment, or place, in which the university is physically situated and of which it is a part. By this definition, the university can in no sense be conceived of as separate from its community, and, seen from either direction, neither the community nor the university is seen as ‘the Other’. This is the perspective of an ‘engaged university’ (Clark et al, 2001).

Engaged universities and engaged scholarship: The University of Southern California’s Senate (Clark et al, 2001) has usefully defined engaged universities as those that ‘enter into reciprocal relationships with the communities of which they are a part’ to ‘combat the problems of their local communities’. Engaged universities work towards, and learn by, ‘creating substantive transformations in community life and practices’; they ‘actually transform the societies in which they find themselves, and reciprocally, find themselves significantly changed by such interaction and connection’ (ibid). Hence, the definition of engaged scholarship consists of all the forms of scholarly activity that comprise the engaged university—processes of mutual engagement which are directed towards the development, improvement, and enhancement of both the community and the university through applied scholarship.
Scholarship, Citizenship, and Civic Responsibility: The conceptual framework outlined in this section leads to the conclusion that community engagement directed towards community development and renewal is the practice of citizenship for scholars and the practice of civic responsibility for the university. These are perennial functions of the university which should clearly be pursued for their obvious mutual benefits.

Methodology

The research for this report was conducted over four weeks for the purposes of providing an analysis of the role of universities in local community development; a mapping of current activity by Victorian institutions; an identification of some models of best practice, either within the State or elsewhere; and recommendations for ways in which the Victorian Government can foster community development through universities.

The research consists of the following:

- a literature review, including an analysis of current government reports, discussion papers, official university strategic documents, annual reports, and strategic planning documents;

- semi-structured interviews with researchers and university personnel chosen for their research profile, unit association, or known community engagement activities; and,

- a mapping of examples of university community engagement practices and activities within Victoria.
Literature Review and Policy Analysis

The engaged university enriches the student experience and changes the campus culture by creating a learning community. The engaged university enlarges opportunities for both faculty and students to access research, internship, and learning opportunities in organizations and communities.

The engaged university embraces the needs of diverse communities and creates a broader sense of identification with the values and capabilities of the academy. The engaged university, because of its community wide and institutionalised commitment to putting knowledge to work in the service of society, demonstrates the value of lifelong learning and builds a culture of lifelong learning, both within the academy and in the society as a whole.

– Christensen et al (1998, p.)

The Civic Function of Universities

Ira Harkavy, a leading American scholar in the field of community engagement, bases his research on a primarily civic conception of the university: namely, that the university is firstly an agent for civic education (Harkavy, 2001). As such, he sees the university’s primary responsibility as the civic well-being of the city, region, or community in which it is embedded. Similarly, in the Australian context, Simon Marginson and Stuart Macintyre (2000) provide a comprehensive historical explanation of ‘how the university served as nation-building institution that nourished crucial civic virtues’ (Macintyre, 1999).

Tony Coady defines the university’s mission as the pursuit of ‘intellectual virtues’, such as ‘honesty, intellectual courtesy, indifference to mere fashion in ideas, and a dedication to the regulative ideal of truth’ (Coady, 1998; also Coady, 2000). Coady argues that these virtues underpin the recognition, development, and maintenance of civic goods, such as ‘health, freedom from grinding poverty, enjoyment, friendship, love, the care of children’—goods which are ‘not merely instrumental’, but which are definitive of healthy communities (Coady, 1998).

Many other researchers have also recognised the primarily civic role of universities, of the social virtues they can promote, and the ways in which they can enrich social development (e.g. Billington, 1991; Crittenden, 1997; Lowe, 1994; Paterson, 1998; Pusey, 1991; Stilwell
1998; Warehime, 1993; Watson, 2002). These scholars emphasise various aspects of what Coady describes as ‘intellectual virtues’ as being central to healthy democracies, to excellent scholarship, and to effective citizenship. Scholarly engagement with citizens, communities, schools, industries, NGOs, and governments to pursue social development objectives is therefore not a function that universities can simply put to one side; it is central to the nature of the university, and thus to its place in society. While the social, technological, political, and economic contexts of Australian universities have changed immensely since the University of Sydney first began in 1850, the idea that universities are central to civic and social development remains largely unchanged (Brown & Muirhead, 2001).

However, given a national system of 38 universities spread across 174 campuses, and the vastly different geographical and socio-economic contexts in which campuses are situated, the problem of concretely defining specific community development objectives for a particular university, or indeed which particular objectives most need to be met, is not a problem amenable to broad policy solutions. Only through engaged, community-based scholarship can the civic responsibilities of Australian universities be effectively met in any specific sense.

The Mutual Benefits of Community Engagement

Harkavy and Puckett (2000) outline four arguments as to why the University should pursue effective community engagement. First, they argue that community engagement is in the university’s self-interest, because good relationships with the community promote and maintain, for instance, such goods for the university as campus safety and aesthetic appeal. Second, they argue that there is a relationship between the university and the surrounding urban community such that if a university withdraws from interaction and involvement with its surrounding community, particularly if that community is in a state of social deterioration, it undermines the interests of the university. Third, a more engaged approach to research, one which sees communities as partners rather than research objects, promotes the advancement of community development objectives, both within the community and the University. Such an approach also results in advancing the quality of research and teaching within the University. Finally, the ideal of civic obligation is the crux of their fourth argument for university involvement in community development and renewal. That is, they argue that the university has a responsibility to demonstrate its civic obligations through the inculcation of civic values. In terms of teaching outcomes, they argue that the

BEST PRACTICE MODEL 6
Campus Compact, Brown University, New York, New York, USA

Campus Compact is a coalition of college and university presidents (VCs) committed to helping students develop the values and skills of citizenship through participation in public and community service. It is the only national higher education organization whose primary purpose is to support campus-based public and community service.

Our presidents believe that by creating a supportive campus environment for the engagement in community service, colleges and universities can best prepare their students to be active, committed, and informed citizens and leaders of their communities.

Member campuses bond together as a coalition to actively engage presidents, faculty, staff, and students to promote a renewed vision for higher education—one that supports not only the civic development of students, but the campus as an active and engaged member of its community.
University has an obligation to provide appropriate models of responsible citizenship for its students. By promoting civic responsibility in teaching, research, and scholarship, the university naturally promotes community development outcomes by assisting people who live in close proximity and by promoting civic values amongst its students.

Clark et al (2001) identify the mutual benefits of engagement in terms of the university’s standing from a more traditional scholarly perspective. They see that ‘by positioning itself as an engaged university, USC will be able to produce cutting-edge research that links theory to practice, while simultaneously creating positive transformation in the community’ (p. 3). Further, by encouraging community engagement objectives which focus on community development, the USC’s Senate believes that the university’s rankings ‘will improve, not in spite of its community outreach programs, but because of them’ (p. 8).

In Australia, engaged scholarship oriented towards community development objectives has yet to be recognised in funding regimes as being inherently beneficial in terms of scholarly excellence and university rankings. While the civic role of universities is acknowledged by individual universities, the AVCC (Schreuder, 2002), and at the Federal policy level (Nelson, 2002d), they are most often framed as funding problems related to ‘community service’ rather than as research opportunities which can raise the university’s profile by providing the basis for excellent research outputs and community enrichment.

Thus the AVCC frames the problem as follows:

*Universities’ engagement with their communities needs to be supported, in part through targeted funding. Future engagement should be supported through regional and state development programs, including those of State Governments. Funding options should be tied to a verifiable high level of regional engagement with productive outcomes. University community engagement would also be supported through more effective taxation arrangements to support donations and regional investment. This element would be of particular importance to those universities with a mission to help develop their local region.*

– (Schreuder, 2002, p. 3)

However, as the USC Senate notes, the mutual benefits community engagement activities bring include not only economic and social benefits, they also provide a unique basis for research outputs which ‘demonstrate greater accountability to the community’ because ‘they produce research and publications that document the effectiveness of their community
activities, generate theories with respect to social practice, and disseminate the findings in both scholarly publications and in genres that are meaningful to members of the community’ (Clark et al, p. 1).

Community engagement, therefore, need not be seen as a funding problem or as a ‘community service obligation’ which is tangential to more formally recognised outcomes of scholarship, such as cutting-edge research and successful grant applications (Nelson, 2002d, p. 57). Indeed, when the civic function of the university is seen as central to the institution, academic excellence becomes a matter of civic professionalism:

Academic professionals are dignified by the fact that, if truly professional, they provide an essential service to society: a service requiring skills not easily acquired, indeed, secured only over a considerable period of time and at considerable expense; a basic service with a set of skills having a serious body of scholarship and research, knowing, and information behind them. And all of this - the service and the skills, the facts and their applications - are to be used carefully, for the betterment of society.
– (Reynolds, 1991, p. 121)

The mutual benefits for scholars, universities, and communities of the engaged university do not require that community engagement, development, and renewal objectives are framed in terms of “community service”. In fact, to do so may be detrimental to academic excellence, however defined. The current Federal approach is to promote ‘differentiation’ between universities in terms of ‘selective excellence in teaching, scholarship, research and community service’ (Nelson, 2002d, p. ix). However, assuming the civic function of universities, and the positive outcomes that excellent approaches to community engagement bring, to separate these aspects of excellence—institutionally or otherwise—would appear to be contrary to the well-being of universities and their communities alike. In fact, the current Federal approach is contradictory, even on its own terms, because it states that if higher education institutions recognise ‘their role in social, economic and cultural development’ they will ‘focus on enhanced community engagement’ (Nelson, 2002d, p. x). Such contradictions arise from a misrecognition of the primarily civic function of universities and their unique roots in local communities.
Funding Community Engagement Objectives

According to the *Setting Firm Foundations* discussion paper, funding arrangements for universities cannot go on as they have (Nelson, 2002c). Regardless of how this is meant, for engaged scholars involved in community development projects, this is most certainly true. It is clearly an undervalued aspect of university life. Consequently, a significant focus for universities involved in community engagement projects is to develop private and NGO partnerships that attract consultancy monies. While such activities can sometimes result in fruitful outcomes for community engagement, the processes involved in raising funds from these sources are time consuming and can tend towards ends rather than means:

*Universities – public and private – are institutions that, first and foremost, are committed to providing education informed by scholarship, and research is an integral component of this commitment. They must also access a range of sources of funding for their teaching and research, increasingly from a diverse range of non-government sources. However, such commercial revenue is a means, and must not come to be regarded an end in itself.*


In terms of community engagement, some of the more successful efforts by universities have been directed towards training community groups to access more funds for their region (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997).

However, an even more important development for community engagement would be a change in DEST performance indicators—that is, a change in the way DEST evaluates and funds community engagement objectives in relation to other aspects of academic activity. At the present time, there is little incentive in DEST funding structures for universities to pursue engaged development objectives. A change in DEST’s priorities which recognises the vital civic role of the university would enable community engagement objectives to be better funded. Such a shift in DEST funding priorities—even a relatively minor one—would make community engagement objectives more feasible and attractive to a broader base of academics and, just as importantly, to university administrators. It would also broaden and redefine the notion

BEST PRACTICE MODEL 9
The Center for Social Innovation, Stanford Graduate School of Business

The mission of the Center for Social Innovation is to build upon the strengths of the Stanford Business School and the University at large to promote more innovative, effective, and efficient solutions to social problems in the United States and around the world. CSI brings academic rigor to bear on understanding the causes and consequences of innovation in the social sector and explores the ways in which best practices from the world of business can be adapted to maximize the positive impact of social innovations. Through the Center, Stanford Business School aims to build the capabilities of current and future leaders, to contribute to the policymaking process, and to encourage the shift of limited resources to areas of greatest effectiveness. Its work covers such fields as education, the environment, health care, social services, the arts, housing and community development, social entrepreneurship, organizational effectiveness and philanthropy.

CSI is currently supporting research into the following research topics:

- The Effects of Non-profit Versus For-Profit Ownership: Private Choices and Public Policy in Health Care Pathways to Social Impact: Strategies for Expansion, Replication, and Dissemination in the Social Sector.
- CSI encourages and supports research to promote the integration of management and business skills to the social sector including, but not limited to, the following: Performance Measurement, including Social Return on Investment; Effects of Comparative Organizational Form on Performance; Efficiency and Effectiveness; The Efficiency of Social Capital Markets; Philanthropic Institutional Design and Outcomes Measurement; The Effect of Non-profit Law on Social Innovation; Corporate Citizenship and Cross-Sector Partnerships; New Approaches to non-profit Strategy and Management; Social and Cause-Related Marketing Strategies of Social Entrepreneurship; The Viability of Social-Purpose Business Organizations; and Specific Challenges of Social Innovation in Education: the Environment, Healthcare, Housing, Community Development, and International Development
of scholarly excellence for academics, shifting the emphasis of academic performance from the university itself to the communities in which universities are embedded.

Summary

While there are many and various approaches to community engagement, there is a recognition that effective programs require common elements to be present. It is also well recognised that elements which are contingent upon the character of particular universities and the environments they occupy must be present. Many American approaches identified here are already being trialled in some form in Australia. Some of the work from North America on civic renewal, for example, has already been adapted by Australian universities to positive effect.

It is clear that while there are many benefits for universities and communities that effectively engage with each other, the political will to recognise engaged scholarship as scholarly excellence is constrained by its definition as “community service”. Incentive structures for community engagement in university funding are clearly lacking.

However, there exist mechanisms and priorities within Federal funding structures which State governments can take advantage of for the purposes of promoting community engagement objectives until Federal funding priorities become amenable to community engagement which have development and renewal objectives. A clear path to funding community engagement activities lies in the framing of community engagement as legitimate academic research, as a form of scholarly excellence. A conception of engaged scholarship which replaces community service is vital to such a role, and State support for problem-based community research can be leveraged to promote whole-of-institution involvement in community engagement objectives.

While the benefits of community engagement are long-term, often indirect, and therefore somewhat less obvious, research shows that the benefits of effective engagement are the result of far-sighted, long-term investment in community well-being and, consequently, in a healthy citizenship. If universities are to participate effectively in much-needed urban, regional, and community development programs, steps must be taken to put in place funding arrangements that encourage universities to engage the communities of which they are a significant part.

“I think we need a principled analysis of which activities we engage in. We can still go off and do something just for the money or because they’re going to shut us down if we don’t do it, or because that department has to generate that capital from that Asian country in order to survive. We can still do those things, but at least we know we’re doing it for that reason and not for our principal reason of what we
stand for and what we believe in. That should remain untouched and still the core reason for our being."
– (Allan Luke, 2001)
Section 2: Findings

Mapping the Challenges

The following themes were distilled from the interviews undertaken. They summarise the main challenges for engaged scholarship initiatives oriented towards community development and renewal:

1. Engaged scholarship oriented towards community development is usually not considered to be a core mission of the university. It is usually regarded as a peripheral activity and either defined as “community service”, or as something to be done for the purposes of publicity or community pacification. Worse still, in some universities, the practice is “actively discouraged”.

   “University departments will always look down on money that does not come from the ARC. Consultancies are somehow seen as being less than pure.”

2. Engaged scholars with community development objectives tend to have difficulty finding the time to do the necessary field work that such scholarship requires. Again, because community development is usually defined as “community service”, there is a low priority accorded to such projects under current funding structures. Consequently teaching commitments and more highly regarded research orientations tend to take priority.

3. Researchers whose work employs best practice community engagement philosophies in their research tend to have difficulty connecting with and matching the pace of publication by their peers because of the low funding priorities involved with community engagement practices oriented towards community development.

4. Practitioners in community engagement rarely receive more than perfunctory acknowledgment of their achievements. Tenure and promotion systems do not generally recognise effective community engagement as scholarly excellence. Consequently, excellence in engaged scholarship does not advance a faculty member’s career. Until more appropriate weighting is given to community engagement activities in staff performance evaluations there will be little incentive for staff to pursue such activities—a situation exacerbated by the present trend towards contract-based employment and market-based approaches to scholarship.

   “The marketing people love it, but if it comes from the department’s funding it tends to make more enemies than friends.”
5. Too few of the university’s most distinguished and senior faculty devote enough of their time or resources towards community engagement initiatives. Conversely, senior faculty do not tend to value or promote the work of scholars who do engage the university’s community.

6. The current funding arrangements within universities are heavily biased against community engagement objectives that may be pursued by departments. Without changes in this area, departments and schools are unlikely to alter their attitudes towards community engagement as current funding structures actively discourage such pursuits.

“You could potentially add a tremendous amount to the community and save a lot of jobs or create a better living environment. But at the moment, your only reward is a budget cut at the end of the year.”

7. The community engagement activities undertaken by faculty are often regarded as being somewhat dislocated from the ‘real’ work of teaching and research being undertaken by the rest of the university.

8. Effective community engagement research, teaching programs, and development activities tend to require far more careful, and therefore time-intensive monitoring than more traditional forms of scholarship. This is rarely reflected in resource and time allocations to community development.
9. Often, funding for community engagement projects with community development objectives requires “entrepreneurial” solutions, especially industry-based partnerships. Such partnerships are also time-intensive to secure and maintain, and can thus often become ends in themselves. Further, impediments to effective engagement can emerge when the agendas of industry partners and communities are in conflict.

10. Short-term, market-oriented pressures upon university administration systems tend to force the more long-term and indirect benefits of engaged scholarship to a lower priority than activities associated with direct and immediate economic returns, such as increasing student enrolment numbers, or otherwise increasing revenues through the development of industry-based grants, consulting, “internationalisation” initiatives, and so on.
Mapping Engagement in Victoria

Despite the challenges facing universities and communities in Victoria, there is a significant practice of engaged community development and community renewal. As this section of the report will demonstrate, there are predictable wide variances in the community engagement practices of Victoria’s universities. It provides an illustrative overview of the range of community engagement activities in Victoria as a foundation for initial policy recommendations. It is hoped that this report will lead to a larger and more comprehensive study at a later date. This section therefore, intends to offer a series of community engagement snapshots of the goals and practices of the universities in their various regions and constituencies. For the sake of overview these engagement practices have been arranged by types, or modes, of engagement.

Modes of Community Engagement

The ways in which a university can most effectively engage in community development depend upon on the type of university, the socio-economic nature of its locality, its major funding sources, its research focus, its heritage, and its aspirations. For the same reasons, each university can – indeed must – understand its community in unique ways. Accordingly, some universities seek to engage with tightly specified communities of interest. Alternatively, other universities identify gaps, or opportunities for engagement in the community, and seek to fill them, while at the same time seeking to maximise funding opportunities. Given the systemic challenges to effective engaged scholarship noted by interviewees, it is not surprising that a limited number of categories for community engagement have been recognised:

- Engagement through celebration
- Engagement through school partnerships
- Engagement through industry partnerships
- Engagement through regional partnerships
- Engagement through specialised centres

Each of these categories, in one way or another, and to varying degrees, relies upon “entrepreneurial” relationships and upon convincing university administrations that community engagement activities have “PR” value for the university or upon making engaged community development ‘pay for itself’ immediately. That is, they rely on the capacity of community engagements to directly increase university revenue, to increase the “brand value” of the university, or, at the very least, to be self-sustaining or cost-free in monetary terms. While such outcomes can undoubtedly be beneficial to the university, the pressures on faculty engaged in community development—an area which is time-consuming and intellectually challenging by nature—are exacerbated by community
development being defined as “community service”, and thus to varying degrees being seen as outside the core functions of teaching and research. This has lead to various institutional objectives in relations to community engagement and development strategies.

Community Engagement Strategies Across Victoria

Industry training and business innovation appear to be strategic forms of engagement favoured by both Deakin and Swinburne universities. While the main focus for Monash is upon industry partnerships and standard research practices, community engagement progress has been made through the Gippsland campus.

RMIT, La Trobe, Victoria and Ballarat Universities each broadly seek to engage with their communities. For RMIT, the focus is on the formation of outside in partnerships with Local Councils and through developing sustainable regions in Melbourne and the northern areas. For Ballarat, Bendigo campus of La Trobe, and the western suburban and western regional campuses of Victoria University, the focus is clearly on engagement with their respective regions. The University of Melbourne has created strong ties with professional organizations and agencies within the arts. Ballarat University has engaged both its constituent community and moved beyond that to develop new value for the region. The development of a partnership with the Ballarat City Council and IBM Global Services (IBMGS) at the Ballarat Technology Park have proven to be a success for the university.

This is a mutually beneficial relationship which is supporting a diversification of the region’s employment base and therefore ensuring the region’s sustainability. IBMGS works with the university on curriculum development and reaps the benefits of being able to

BEST PRACTICE MODEL 10
Policy Research Action Group,
West Town Leadership United, Chicago, Illinois

What is the Policy Research Action Group?

PRAG is a four urban universities and 17 non-profit organizations working together to link research and grassroots activism. PRAG forges collaborative relationships between two unlikely partners—universities and community-based organizations—and conducts actionable research that leads to social change and leadership development in the public policy arena.

A consortium of 17 community-based or community-focused non-profit organizations and four urban universities, the Policy Research Action Group (PRAG) works for social change. PRAG designs and nurtures projects and activities that promote collaboration among communities and universities. By uniting seemingly unlikely partners—urban universities and non-profit organizations—PRAG acts as a catalyst for sound public policy, viable communities, and productive citizens.

For more than 10 years, the Policy Research Action Group (PRAG) has played a catalytic role in many different arenas. On one hand, PRAG grew out of a recognition on the part of a handful of academics that universities were not the sole arbiters of knowledge and wisdom, particularly when it came to studying and interpreting urban communities. PRAG’s leaders challenged their institutions and colleagues to explore a new way of doing research that called for a willingness to collaborate with community practitioners. This new kind of research would join knowledge rooted in practice with theories grounded in scholarship. On the other hand, PRAG’s approach gave community-based organizations new access to university resources to carry out research that helped them assess needs and evaluate programs. Important findings from their practice impacted public policy affecting their constituents. This approach was a significant change from their all too frequent experience of being the subject of academic research without any say about the research design or any feedback as to outcomes. Such new and challenging collaborations have frequently led to changes in public policy and have certainly resulted in changes in the research landscape.

Today there are hundreds of university and community collaborations across the country, even around the world. People from Birmingham, England, El Salvador, and even Australia have come to Chicago to talk about PRAG’s approach. Indeed, collaboration and research that leads to change make a difference.

PRAG is Community-Oriented

All funded research activity involves a collaborative process through which university-based researchers and community-based, nonprofit organization leaders function as equal partners. Together they identify issues affecting Chicago communities, determine research methodologies, collect and analyze data, write reports, and develop action plans.
employ graduates that it has shaped and guided, as well as having the advantage of being able to access university facilities and staff.

There are a number of systemic impediments to the support of community engagement initiatives. An interviewee from Swinburne notes that the DEST funding model constrains community engagement because it strongly influences school/department funding models:

“The funding model is heavily weighted in the favour of the hard sciences and pays little regard, if any, to the effectiveness of community engagement practices.”

While community engagement may have support in some sectors, most interviewees remarked that until the performance indicators for university funding allocations and faculty promotion begin to recognise community engagement in their assessments, little is likely to change.

**Engagement through Celebration**

A major form of community engagement favoured by Australian universities is one which focuses on celebration and cultural activities, the Children’s Theatre model supported by the Clayton campus of Monash University. Such forms are among the most common and popular events within both the institutions and the community.

An example of a community engagement event that promotes sociality between a university and its community is the annual Town and Gown night at Ballarat. A staff member interviewed from Ballarat University described the event as “the most enjoyable of the year” and “one that was looked forward to by staff and community members alike”.

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**BEST PRACTICE MODEL 11**

**Link Research: for posting and finding community based research projects in the USA**

Link allows community-based organizations to post research projects and enables researchers to find meaningful research topics.

**How Does Link Work?**
Using LINK involves three easy steps:
1. Organizations post research projects they would like to have done.
2. Researchers search the site for projects that match their interests and skills.
3. Researchers apply directly to organizations.

**What Are Link’s Goals?**
The benefits of LINK facilitated relationships accrue to both sides: organizations benefit from student work and university-based resources, while researchers apply academic learning to real-world topics and projects. Meanwhile, campuses and communities build productive relationships with each other. More specifically, LINK aims to:

- Provide a research resource that will assist nonprofit organizations and public agencies in their efforts to integrate strategic research, planning, and project evaluation into their work.
- Engage graduate, professional, and college students in projects that utilize their skills to address real needs while building networks in the community.
- Develop new LINKs and reinforce existing ties between universities and communities of which they are a part, thus enhancing the potential for collaborative work and outcomes in the nonprofit and academic sectors.

**Who Is Link?**
LINK is a non-profit organization in a pilot phase of development. LINK has been built with assistance from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the James Irvine Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Open Society Institute, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Sobrato Family Foundation, the Markle Foundation, the Nathan Cummings Foundation, and several generous individuals. LINK is especially grateful to the Stanford University School of Law for providing startup workspace, administrative support, and Internet connectivity. LINK’s co-founders have begun to develop a solid team of stakeholders and the staff is growing. During its pilot phase, LINK is marketing and evaluating its service in three primary metropolitan areas: New York City, Greater Seattle, and the San Francisco Bay Area.

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“Funding model is heavily weighted in the favour of the hard sciences and pays little regard, if any, to the effectiveness of community engagement practices.”
Another example of community engagement through celebration is the 150th Anniversary of Melbourne University planned for next year. The celebrations will include public lectures, heritage exhibits, fine arts exhibitions and music and poetry afternoons.

Engagement through School Partnerships

Both Melbourne and Monash Universities have community linkage programs in place to identify disadvantaged students who are excelling at secondary level and encourage them, through increased support and scholarships, to attend university.

Other universities have school partnerships that focus on youth outreach programs. An example of this is the University of Victoria’s Institute for Youth, Education and Community. The Institute undertakes research, manages community outreach activities and conducts short courses. It has established networks with police, youth organizations, community groups and educators. One of those programs is known as the Portfolio Partnership Program. The program provides alternative entry to university that requires applicants to submit a portfolio of their achievements. It is aimed specifically at mature age applicants and applicants from partner schools in the western suburbs of Melbourne, and from the Sunbury and Macedon areas. The schools that are partnered with VU benefit from Field of Study Advisers, as well as increased access to the local VU campus and awards and scholarships for students. The Advisers assist in the educational design of courses and with the tailoring of programs to the needs of individual students.

One of VU’s most successful programs is Partnership Development. This places education and social work students in VU partner schools for at least one day per week. Each of these projects grow out of a school’s need. Also of great value are the community partnerships that deliver courses to the specific vocational and educational needs that are not being met through other means. These are targeted particularly at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, Women, Immigrants, Refugees and Disabled People.

BEST PRACTICE MODEL 12
Science Shops

In addition to the demands made on research and development by commerce and industry, ‘civil society’ organisations have their own research needs. Diffusion of knowledge often focuses on communication from researchers to society, but increasingly there is a demand for communication from society to researchers. This is the concept of ‘social demand’ for knowledge. Different types of interfaces exist between researchers and society, one of which are the ‘science shops’. Science shops are organisations created as mediators between citizen groups (trade unions, pressure groups, non-profit organisations, social groups, environmentalists, consumers, residents association etc.) and research institutions (universities, independent research facilities). Science shops are important actors in community-based research (CBR). There are many differences in the way science shops are organised and operate, as well as some important parallels.

A science shop provides independent, participatory research support in response to concerns experienced by civil society.

In practice, contact is established between a civil society organisation and a science shop or CBR centre on a problem in which the civil society organisation is seeking research support. In this collective search for a solution new knowledge is generated, or at least existing knowledge is combined and adapted – again, in a true partnership without ‘science’ prevailing in any way. Through their contacts, science shops provide a unique antenna function for society’s current and future demands on science.

There is not one dominant organisational structure defining a science shop. How science shops are organised and operate is highly dependent on their context. The above definition of a science shop might also include organisations that do not self-define as a science shop. Organisations that meet the definition of a science shop and do provide civil society with knowledge and skills through research and education on an affordable basis will be taken into account. The term ‘science’ is used in its broadest sense, incorporating social and human sciences, as well as natural, physical, engineering and technical sciences.
“While it is beneficial for the schools and the students alike, it is also great for me as the coordinator because I get to keep my hand in with the latest teaching practices instead of going stale in the lecture theatre.”

One of the most successful of these cases is the Horn of Africa Project that takes refugees from that region and provides them with the necessary educational support. Due to the fact that many of the children in the project had lost an average of five or six years of schooling in the process of persecution, flight and asylum, local community members wanted to set up a homework program. The university assisted in doing this and also provided pre-service teachers and pre-service youth workers to assist in the program.

The success of the first phase has now seen the addition of government funding for longitudinal research with some hope that the Multicultural Commission will also be able to provide funding for the extension of the program to other refugee communities. While this is the case, one of the interviewees from VU stressed that money was not their motivation in beginning the program.

“We did it because the university could and should give its time and expertise. If we don’t there’s not much point in claiming that we are a university.”

**Engagement through Industry Partnerships**

An example of a community engagement with an industry focus is Victoria University’s project with Victorian Industry Education Partnerships to develop on-line CVs for young people. For Monash, Deakin and Swinburne Universities, their partnerships with industry and business are now seen as core activities. This is a strategic choice identified in most of the official documentation and is reflected in general university practices.

Swinburne has developed a program known as Industry Based Learning. The program acts with industry to place students in vocational employment as part of the course structure. For Deakin University, the industry partnerships tend to take the form of large scale corporate training. The model that Monash University has adopted is one that capitalises not on vocational or corporate training, but on large scale industry funded collaborative research projects.
Engagement through Regional Partnerships

One of the more successful approaches to empowering community is the development of the community’s potential for securing additional strategic funds.

The University of Victoria and Ballarat University, through the agency of the Centre for Health Research and Practice to provide training in successful tender writing—with an evaluation element—to local community groups.

The Gippsland Campus of Monash University has been involved with local businesses, police, and residents in the La Trobe Valley region on a number of partnership programs since 1997. While some have been seen as problematic, such as the Regional Anti-Violence Project; others, such as the Active Citizens/New Technologies project have been more successful in getting the university accepted as a place of value by local communities.

A Building a Future for the Country is a program being run by the La Trobe Centre for Sustainable Regional Communities (CSRC). The project has received financial support from the Commonwealth Government to conduct a pilot project in the towns of Carisbrook, Dunolly, Maldon, Newstead, Talbot and Wedderburn.

Businesses, community members and local government representatives all are heavily involved with the CSRC to build the project through local taskforces in consultation with a regional management team.

CSRC also has partnership projects running in Shepparton, Mildura, and a raft of other locations in association with the Victorian Local Governance Association. The work in Shepparton focuses on the specific problems of the region and aims to increase community participation in local government decision making regarding those problems.

The Mildura project specifically focuses on the production of detailed economic modelling of the region. The project intends to produce outcomes that will enable...
local and regional planners to understand the imports and exports of key industry sectors in the area.

The CSRC is also involved in a number of other projects focused on economic mapping of the Central Murray Area to identify the needs of other rural and regional communities for the purpose of equitable and sustainable models for restructuring.

In all of these projects, partnership with local community members, governments and/or business is considered to be the key to success.

“Collaboration is so fundamental to achieving our goals, in any environment; even the imposition of competition policy seems to have induced collaboration – at least recognition of the need.”
– Maureen Rogers & David Ensor (2001)

The Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology is likewise heavily focused on serving and engaging with its local communities through relevant teaching and learning, research and innovation.

Community Services and Regional Partnerships, a sub-group of RMIT’s Research and Development Section, coordinates and oversees the bulk of RMIT’s community partnership programs. Some of the projects that Community Services and Regional Partnerships are currently involved in include the Melbourne Youth Opportunities Vision, Whereveruni, CBD Pathways Planning Trial, The Northern Interactive Education Coordinated Area Program, the Whittlesea Youth Commitment, and Regional Development Partnerships in East Gippsland, Goulburn-Ovens, the Southern Grampians, Swan Hill, and Wodonga.

The Whittlesea Youth Commitment is a community development initiative that is designed to addresses youth unemployment in the region. Many of the young people in the region are not choosing to either complete high school and make the transition to university or TAFE, or to leave school and move into one of the many apprenticeships that the region’s manufacturing industries. The program’s aim is to ensure that every young person leaving school in the City of Whittlesea, especially those who leave before completing VCE or its equivalent, makes a smooth transition between education and further training, education or employment. One of the program heads from RMIT explained,
“There seems to be the assumption that higher education is the only way forward for young people after school. In the Whittlesea area there is still a large manufacturing base and even a large food processing industry. What these businesses are crying out for is trained workers who have trades. Part of what we are doing is trying to get the young people who would be better pursuing a trade to follow that path.”

Another example of community partnership programs being undertaken by RMIT is the Melbourne Youth Learning Opportunities Vision (MYLO). The central goal of MYLO is to develop and implement a strategy for learning access by marginalised youth in Melbourne’s CBD. The MYLO model being developed from the project is to be replicated in other communities.

Engagement Through Specialised Centres

A number of Victorian universities have aligned engagement strategies to centres, units and institutes. These structures are broadly focused on the coordination and development of community engagement activities. The advantages of such specialised units was noted in the Department of Education, Science and Training discussion paper *Varieties Of Excellence: Diversity, Specialisation And Regional Engagement* (2002, p.53).

> Many of the more effective partnerships have been through industry and technology precincts, project-based relationships or participation in Cooperative Research Centres. A number of purpose-built research centres for regional studies have been established over the past decade, for example, the University of New England’s Institute for Rural Futures, La Trobe University’s Faculty for Regional Development at Bendigo, and The University of Queensland’s Community Service and Research Centre at Ipswich.

A number of centres specialising in community engagement have been established in Victoria, for example:

1. The La Trobe University Centre for Sustainable Regional Development (CSRC) was founded in 1998 specifically to support regional and rural communities around Bendigo and Central Victoria as well as regional centres across the rest of the north, and north west of the State from Shepparton to Mildura.

2. The Ballarat University Institute for Regional and Rural Research (IRRR) is a new organization comprised of the Centre for Informatics and Applied Optimisation (CIAO); the Centre for Environmental Management (CEM); the Centre for Health Research and Practice (CHRP); and the Centre for Regional Innovation and Competitiveness (CRIC). The purpose of the establishment of the IRRR is to enhance the research capacity of the community to by successfully tender and
develop national competitive grants. The IRRR is a key strategy that the Ballarat University is employing to add value to the greater Ballarat region.

3. RMIT Community Services and Regional Partnerships is a unit designed and dedicated to meet RMIT’s vision that it be connected to and involved with each community in which it resides. The unit is a key element in what RMIT described in their Crossroads submission as the development of “a fifth scholarship – the scholarship of partnership and engagement.” Community Services and Regional Partnerships addresses its core business in a number of ways, from citizenship and cultural awareness projects and courses, to urban renewal and disadvantaged youth learning projects, to local government partnerships in the metropolitan and northern metropolitan region of Melbourne, flexible and lifelong learning approaches, and school linkages through action learning projects. RMIT’s community engagement activities cover the Melbourne CBD and northern metropolitan regions, East Gippsland, and wherever RMIT has a campus in Australia or overseas.

4. University of Victoria’s Institute for Youth, Education and Community is housed by the Faculty of Human Development. The Institute grew out of projects involving youth homelessness and is now responsible for the large number of tenders, trust grants and other consultancy monies that are generated by the Department. The key focus of the Institute is partnership growth and sustainability. Much of the work done by the Institute involves engagement by innovative and relevant teaching and learning through partnership building. The Institute’s community engagement activities focus primarily around the collection of VU campuses in Melbourne’s western suburbs and the Sunbury and Macedon areas.

Mapping Summary

The above provides a brief overview community engagement activities by Victoria’s Universities. It is far from being an exhaustive treatment. It indicates that there is a considerable variety of approaches being actively pursued throughout the State. All interviewees canvassed for this report express dissatisfaction with current funding models, and with the concomitant low priorities given to community engagement. Consequently, each of the above categories of approaches to community engagement is limited by a reliance upon separating community engagement from the “mainstream” of university teaching and research, and from the university itself. A broader systemic definition of scholarly excellence is essential, one which recognises engaged scholarship as invaluable to community well-being; that the local community and university are socially, economically, and historically interdependent; that engaged scholarship and the engaged university are fundamental to the civic responsibility of universities; and that, therefore, it essential that engaged scholarship be seen as central to the university and recognised accordingly.
Section 3: Recommendations

Policy Recommendations

Victorian universities have the potential to not only make a difference in the community, but also to transform the very way in which we think about universities in Australia, including their research emphases and the role of academics and students within such settings.

In the current context there exists a number of opportunities for Victorian universities to become more engaged universities. However, we are well aware that engaged community development unaccompanied by appropriate funding frameworks, and a redefined concept of academic scholarship and reward, cannot sustain what an engaged university should be about. The *Redefining Excellence Report* serves as a springboard for further thought and deliberation about the development of engaged universities. The specific recommendations are adapted from the following best practice community engagement initiatives:

4. *South Africa’s Community-Higher Education-Service Partnerships Project*
5. *The Goodna Service Integration Project* (University of Queensland, Ipswich City Council and Queensland State Government)

The following recommendations are founded on a redefined conception of scholarly excellence which recognises engaged approaches to community development as being central to the civic function of universities.
1.0 Recommendations for Federal Government

1.1 *The funding of engaged scholarship programs must not be done on an ad hoc basis,* but must be recognised as an essential part of the operating costs for universities. DEST performance indicators should be changed to recognise effective community engagement as an essential and valid aspect of academic achievement. A shift in DEST funding priorities would make community engagement objectives more feasible and would broaden and redefine the notion of scholarly excellence for academics.

1.2 *A report on progress* done on a yearly basis should require an account of the university’s efforts to become more engaged in the development of its local community. Reports should consist of information on efforts in the areas of *institutional policies, organizational structures, resource allocation, staff appointments and promotions, and mainstream academic programs*.

1.3 *Promotion of community engagement,* and of the civic responsibility of higher education institutions by the Federal Government should become a central policy objective which is part of an integrated, whole of government strategy.

1.4 *The Federal Government should pursue national initiatives* which promote and raise funds for universities to become more responsive to communities by mainstreaming academic and research programs with community development objectives as a whole of government strategy.

2.0 Recommendations for State Government

The State Government has a significant role to play in the furthering of universities and their relationship with local communities through: the support of relevant research projects; the development of facilitative higher education policy and practice; the linking of Victorian and international scholars with interest in engagement; partnerships and service/community-based learning; and the dissemination of research information. More specifically, the State Government could further develop the following recommendations:

2.1 *A co-ordinated program of research* should be aligned with the current establishment of the Australian arm of the International Consortium of Higher Education and Civic Responsibility [http://iche.sas.upenn.edu/]. The consortium is currently finalising an auspice relationship with the Joint Committee on Higher Education, Australia. The research project is a joint effort of the Council of Europe,
South Africa’s Joint Education Trust and the following U.S. higher educational associations represented on the U.S. Executive Committee of the Consortium: American Association for Higher Education, American Association of Colleges and Universities, American Council on Education, and Campus Compact. Internationally, and more particularly in Australia, it will develop a number of local research projects, overseen by a national advisory research group. Using research generated by the pilots, the research program will generate:

- Case studies
- Publications
- Conference proceedings
- Electronic communication media (website, newsletter), and
- A comprehensive database on Victorian and Australian scholarship in the field of community-higher education-service partnerships.

2.2 **Seed funds** for engaged scholarship could be pooled, in a partnership between the Victorian Local Government Association and the Victorian Government’s Department of Education, Employment and Training to provide for a number of lead ‘engaged universities’ to further develop their community engagement and development agendas. This seed funding could be used to leverage existing funds from such bodies as the Australian Research Council (for example, through the ARC Linkage program). Universities could be invited to express interest in participating in a strategic project that would build their capacity to undertake whole of organisation changes with engaged community development agendas. Local community, service organisations and universities could collaboratively apply for these funds to undertake mutually beneficial development work within their local communities. These activities, based on the current university and community engagement work being undertaken by the International Consortium and the Joint Education Trust’s South African methodology, could include the following *six tier* process:
DIAGRAM 1. Higher Education & Community Engagement Audit

Identifying Partners
All participating universities to identify at least one community and one service sector partner. Generally, community partners are defined as a specific geographic community. Service sector partners included NGOs; chambers of commerce and industry; private sector corporations; and local, metropolitan and provincial authorities.

Formation of Partnership Learning Structures
At each participating community, the planning process could be facilitated by a Victorian Community and Higher Education core group, consisting of at least one community member, one academic, and one service sector representative nominated by the university in consultation with its community and service sector partners. In order to build the capacity of these teams, the university and local higher education institutions could develop accredited and non-accredited programs in Leadership Capacity Building, Collaborative Practice and Service Integration. The various modules could be designed to inform the planning and development process in participating communities, universities and service sector agencies. The UQ Community Service and Research Centre has a demonstrated successful model of a professional development and training with key purpose to influence the collaborative and strategic planning of the Ipswich Community through partnerships with the Ipswich City Council, State and Federal Government and local community groups and individuals. A Graduate Certificate and learning programs in Community and Interprofessional Leadership More than $200 000 in sponsorship funds have been combined into the program and over 200 community leaders have participated. (Refer attachment)

Audit of Community Service
In order to match community assets and development priorities with university initiatives, Victorian Community and Higher Education core groups would be required to conduct an audit of their existing community service activities. The audit would reveal the amount that the universities are engaged in a wide range of community service initiatives. The starting point of any audit according to John Goddard’s UNESCO Report 2001, would include:

- the direct economic impact analysis of universities as an economic sector;
- the contribution of universities to social and community development. The audit should provide public evidence as to how universities contribute a source of knowledge, linking the region to the wider world.

A complete inventory needs to be undertaken of the university’s community-based research and engagement activity, so that a more comprehensive awareness of the current state of affairs can be developed. This assessment would then serve as a frame of reference for considering future plans and activities. The report that emanates from such an effort should address such topics as:

1. The forms of community interaction that currently exist at the university, including community service, research, outreach, and training. A determination should be made of the extent to which community interaction is appropriately classified as basic research, applied research, action research, clinical experiences/internships, volunteering, service learning, administration or school-based outreach, or resource partnerships.
2. The formulation of clear definitions of the kind of interactions taking place. Definitions need to minimally and clearly articulate what is meant by terms such as community outreach engagement, connection, and the community interactions.
3. The research methodologies that are currently employed by the university faculty to study the community, with recommendations regarding which ones might be used in the future.
4. The departments and schools in which these programs are housed.
5. The strengths and limitations of the existing programs.

The local universities and regional agencies should jointly commission the audit. Given the diversity of universities within Victoria, it would be also be desirable if such an audit were co-sponsored by the Federal and State government, in collaboration with a body representing the university sector as a whole.

Community Situation Analysis
In contrast to the more usual deficit-based approach, the Victorian Community and Higher Education core groups could undertake an asset-based approach to the situation analysis, focusing on the identification of assets within each community which could be used to further the aims of collaborative. Typical assets could include: schools; clinics; businesses; churches; community associations; NGOs; recreation and sport facilities; skills and capacities within the community; and, in rural settings, physical resources such as rivers; dams; springs; reservoirs; and boreholes. Development priorities could include local economic development; development of community infrastructure; capacity building and skills training; development of recreational facilities; health services; crime prevention; tourism; and conservation of the natural resources.

An Agency Analysis
All of these impacts may have arisen without any conscious intervention on the part of the universities or regional agencies. Universities are characteristically lightly managed institutions and beneficial regional effects may simply flow out of the teaching and research priorities set for themselves by the academic staff. At the same time, regional agencies may have not clearly articulated regional needs to the universities, particularly to individual academics responsible for the delivery teaching and research programs (as distinct from universities’ senior management). There may therefore have been many missed opportunities for productive engagement.

To reveal these opportunities, it will be necessary for universities to enter into a dialogue with various agencies in the regional development process. These agencies are likely to include:
- Central Government bodies responsible for funding higher education;
- Local and regional elected authorities;
- Employers and employers organisations (e.g. chambers of commerce);
- Arts organisations
- Regional media
- Schools and colleges
- Recent graduates, present and prospective students

In the context of national and international influences, each of these groups will have distinct goals and missions, means of delivering on these, financial drivers and constraints and customer/client relations. The nature of the interest of these groups in the well-being of the local community and how they can be articulated to universities will also vary. Unlike universities, which seldom have a defined territory, many of these bodies will be required by law to operate within a defined administrative area. The difference in the degree of permeability of territorial boundaries will create difficulties for dialogue that will have to be overcome. Notwithstanding these difficulties the partners will need to work together towards developing a framework which focuses on the nature of their regional interests and which can provide a starting point for further discussion.

Strategic Plan for Community Engagement
Building on the outcomes mentioned above, the participating Victorian Community and Higher Education core groups would be required to complete a strategic plan for operationalising their policy on community engagement. The development of these plans would require extensive consultation and collaboration and be supported by the learning with participating community partners, academics, academic administrators, members of the university senior executive, and service sector representatives. All strategic plans would require approval by the university senior executive as an institution-wide strategy for community engagement.

Please see Diagram 2. for potential strategic focus questions for whole of institute change.
Chart 2. Higher Education & Community Engagement Strategic Questions

What are the roles of different constituencies in ensuring higher education responsiveness to societal needs?
A whole of government approach.
3.0 Recommendations for Universities

3.1 *Mission Statements:* Universities should be encouraged to adapt and operationalise mission statements that advocate civic responsibility through engaged development of local communities, not as mere “community service” add-ons, but as activities which are seen as core academic and research programs. The intent of this recommendation is to redefine the purpose of higher education to explicitly include engaged community development and renewal objectives as core activities. These aspects of higher education are important in informing community, student, and academic expectations.

3.2 *Strategic priority:* Universities should be encouraged to define their role in renewing and developing local communities through mainstream teaching and research programs as a strategic priority. Engaged community development should be the responsibility of a range of agents in the higher education institution, including academic program convenors; academic departments and department heads; faculty boards; University Council; and University Senate.

3.3 *Policies & Strategies:* Universities should design and adopt policies and specific strategies that contribute to the engaged development or renewal of local communities. To be effective, these policies and strategies must be supported by an institutional and cultural framework that is responsive to community development priorities and strategies.

3.4 *Recognition and rewards:* Universities should give due recognition and reward to academics who excel at implementing engaged community development and renewal programs, whether by applying the theoretical and conceptual resources of their discipline to local community development needs via teaching and research, or better, by developing coordinated interdisciplinary efforts across the university.

3.5 *Epistemology:* The notion of scholarship should be broadened within higher education policy and funding to include the application of theory to practical problems within local communities. This can be linked to wider priorities for innovation and knowledge creation in that it is through the scholarship of application that knowledge discovery is enriched and enhanced. Engaged scholarship should also be seen as a generative source for new theories and knowledge, one which naturally relies on the unique character of a university’s locale.

3.6 *Engaged Learning Communities:* Universities should facilitate the creation of multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral engaged learning communities that are based on key development priorities. Each such community can become a focal point for developing partnerships between local and regional authorities, the university, other
service providers and the private sector. Engaged learning communities can also provide the context and infrastructure for the development of new teaching and research programs that are responsive to community development priorities.

3.7 Resource Allocation: Universities should allocate a percentage of their annual budget to developing and effectively implementing policies, strategies, organisational structures, facilities, and programs that promote engaged community development. The annual budget of Universities should include standard line items dedicated to these initiatives.

3.8 Encourage a range of engaged scholarship activities: Universities should develop engaged teaching and research programs in a wide range of academic disciplines, including agriculture, architecture, arts, building sciences, economics, engineering, health, humanities, law, natural sciences, social sciences, and management. This will place universities in a more effective position to engage with a broad spectrum of community development.
Section 4: Bibliography

Select Bibliography

This list of texts represents bodies of work that have been consulted during the course of this project either for the purposes of direct input or general reference and background reading.


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