

Report of the Community Engagement Committee UCR 2020: The Path to Preeminence

I. Executive Summary

Stimulated in part by the vision articulated by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation as adopted by the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), research universities are increasingly making community engagement a core value. This represents not only a renewed commitment by land-grant and public universities to respond to societal aspirations and to train tomorrow's citizen-leaders, but also to maintain support so crucial for continued funding of our institutions from both public and private sources.

The charge of the Community Engagement Committee was to focus on community outreach and external relationships and to review and make recommendations on how UCR can strengthen its contribution to the community. Utilizing the Kellogg Commission report *Returning to Our Roots: The Engaged Institution*¹ and other literature, survey data, and the practices of AAU institutions ranked in the top 25 "Good Neighbor Universities" for guidance, the committee in this report proposes a vision and mission for UCR's future community engagement and advances specific recommendations to achieve the vision and goals.

A. A Vision of Community Engagement for UCR

The University of California, Riverside aspires to be an institution that has a solid partnership with its communities by engaging them – regionally, statewide, nationally and internationally – utilizing the knowledge, creativity and commitment of its students, faculty, staff and alumni to support a better quality of life.

This vision is reflected in the University of California mission of teaching, research and public service, as well as the current UCR Mission Statement:

The University of California Riverside, *serves the needs and enhances the quality of life of the diverse people of California, nation and world* through knowledge—its communication, discovery, translation, application, and preservation. The undergraduate, graduate, and professional degree programs, research programs, and *extension activities* develop leaders who *aspire, create, and enrich California's economic, social, cultural, and environmental future* (emphasis added).

Community Engagement Mission

UCR's mission for community engagement is to foster a campus culture of engagement promoting high-impact community partnerships that are mutually beneficial, innovative, collaborative and

¹ "Returning to Our Roots: The Engaged Institution," Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities, National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (now Association of Public and Land-grant Universities), February 1999. <http://www.aplu.org/NetCommunity/Document.Doc?id=187>.

accessible to the diverse communities we serve. Integral to UCR's mission of teaching, research and public service, community engagement will apply the campus's scholarly assets to matters affecting quality of life, including education, economic and community development, athletics, arts and culture, and the environment.

Goals

As the only public research university in Inland Southern California, UCR has a social imperative to contribute to the well-being of its communities. UCR's community engagement enterprise aspires to:

- Foster academically-focused partnerships that benefit the university and community
- Advance economic and community development in Inland Southern California
- Capitalize on the strengths and aspirations of communities in our region to address the needs of Inland Southern California, the state of California, the nation and the world
- Complement and build on the diversity of our campus
- Create and extend knowledge that advances the well-being of our region, state, nation, and the world and that enriches the teaching and research functions of the university
- Enhance and promote lifelong learning on campus and in our communities
- Broaden engagement to communities outside Inland Southern California where UCR has a presence, including other regions in California, in the U.S., and the world
- Merge academic inquiry with sustained civic engagement
- Encourage and coordinate experiential/service learning for our students
- Advocate volunteerism
- Encourage community engagement and recognize faculty, students, and staff for achievements related to community engagement.

B. Recommendations

The Community Engagement Committee sets forth the following recommendations for strengthening community engagement and contributing to UCR's communities. A rationale for each recommendation, and suggested strategies for implementation are included in the body of this report (relevant sections noted).

1. Create and support an organizational culture that reflects UCR's commitment to community engagement in a manner that is mutually beneficial to UCR and community stakeholders (III.A)
2. Establish partnerships and alliances with business, government, education, arts, and other groups that are productive and mutually beneficial (III.B)
3. Develop academic programs that provide both meaningful and distinctive educational experiences and opportunities for community engagement (IV.A)
4. Develop research programs that create knowledge through engaging the community or are of direct relevance to the community (IV.B)
5. Create incentives to recognize and reward appropriate and relevant community engagement by faculty (IV.C)

6. Create and support an organizational infrastructure that promotes community engagement (V.A)
7. Develop capacity to support community engagement (V.B)
8. Encourage campus departments and organizations to continue and expand their own outreach and public service initiatives that serve community interests (V.C)
9. Develop strategies for engagement and outreach to regions not in UCR's immediate vicinity (VI)

Each of these recommendations is discussed in detail in the sections that follow.

II. Overview

A. Rationale for Community Engagement as part of UCR's Strategic Plan

As the only land-grant public research university in our region, UCR bears responsibility to engage with its communities in ways that maximize the impact of our humanistic, artistic, athletic and scientific contributions that advance social good and solve problems. UCR has long recognized its responsibility as a public trust to mobilize teaching, research and public service efforts to improve the economic prosperity and quality of life of the citizens of Inland Southern California and state of California. Many research universities across the nation – including most of the AAU member institutions – have community engagement as a core value and have established offices to coordinate such activities. Additionally, institutions of higher learning increasingly are developing new service-learning models as a strategy in providing a rigorous and relevant curriculum which will prepare students for success in the 21st century. Finally, we are in the midst of a critical period in which public perceptions of the contributions that universities make toward solving societal problems and providing first-class, accessible education to California students will have a direct impact on public and private support for UC Riverside. Partnerships and alliances with businesses, schools, governments, civic organizations and the non-profit community can also open doors that can enhance our research and provide quality experiential learning opportunities for students that go beyond what they gain in the classroom.

Definitions and Attributes

It is important to begin with a discussion of what is meant by community engagement. The National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, now the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), sought the support of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation to examine the future of public higher education in the United States in relation to outreach and community engagement. Excerpts from the Kellogg Foundation report, *Returning to Our Roots: The Engaged Institution*,² provide an excellent discussion of engagement that serves as a backdrop to strategic planning in this area:

² "Returning to Our Roots: The Engaged Institution," Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities, National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (now Association of Public and Land-grant Universities), February 1999. <http://www.aplu.org/NetCommunity/Document.Doc?id=187>.

One challenge we face is growing public frustration with what is seen to be our unresponsiveness. At the root of the criticism is a perception that we are out of touch and out of date. Another part of the issue is that although society has problems, our institutions have “disciplines.” In the end, what these complaints add up to is a perception that, despite the resources and expertise available on our campuses, our institutions are not well organized to bring them to bear on local problems in a coherent way.

Against that backdrop, this Commission concludes that it is time to go beyond outreach and service to what the Kellogg Commission defines as “engagement.” By engagement, we refer to institutions that have redesigned their teaching, research, and extension and service functions to become even more sympathetically and productively involved with their communities, however community may be defined.

Engagement goes well beyond extension, conventional outreach, and even most conceptions of public service. Inherited concepts emphasize a one-way process in which the university transfers its expertise to key constituents. Embedded in the engagement ideal is a commitment to sharing and reciprocity. By engagement the Commission envisions partnerships, two-way streets defined by mutual respect among the partners for what each brings to the table. An institution that responds to these imperatives can properly be called what the Kellogg Commission has come to think of as an “engaged institution.” We believe an engaged university can enrich the student experience and help change the campus culture. It can do so by enlarging opportunities for research and new knowledge and by broadening access to internships and various kinds of off-campus learning opportunities.

Throughout this report, we will utilize terminology that will be familiar to most readers, but whose definitions are perhaps not widely understood. As foundational background, we provide here brief descriptions to achieve a mutual understanding of some of the common ways that community engagement is expressed.

Civic (community) engagement is characterized by an institution-wide culture of community embeddedness characterized by true partnerships between “town and gown” that provide and support opportunities for making a positive difference. At its best, civic engagement combines an institution’s scholarly and teaching enterprises in a manner that advances the community and broadens the student experience.

Community partnerships are mutually beneficial relationships that stimulate inquiry and the imagination and enhance the quality of people’s lives. These partnerships underwrite educational, economic, cultural, corporate, and political activities providing faculty, students and community access to research, learning, and social and cultural experiences. Community partnerships present opportunities to disseminate relevant scientific contributions, ensure the preservation and conservation of the community’s cultural and natural heritage, inspire originality and creativity, provide a glimpse of transcendence, and develop a sense of personal and community identity. Such alliances and partnerships profoundly strengthen ties between an institution and its community.

Service learning/experiential learning enables students to apply their classroom/laboratory education and critical thinking skills in a “hands-on” manner in the community, emphasizing the central role of the experience in the learning process. These activities may be faculty-driven, through the integration of service learning elements into coursework, co-curricular activities, and internships, or may be initiated in other ways. Service learning stimulates students to explore the academic dimension of applied civic work and motivates them to become citizen-leaders in their own right.

Volunteerism/community service/public service is direct service by students, faculty, staff and alumni for the benefit of the broader community. Not necessarily connected to a student’s academic program, these activities nevertheless challenge the participants to expand their understanding of societal issues and their role in improving the quality of life in a community.

Outreach is the extension of academic inquiry and discovery to application beyond the institution, ordinarily in a one-way direction in which knowledge is transferred from the university to community stakeholders. This differs from outreach in the student recruitment function.

The Kellogg Commission identified seven guiding principles³ underlying an effectively engaged university. In brief, the seven attributes are:

- Responsiveness – the extent to which the university is listening and responding to the needs of our community
- Respect for partners – truly collaborative relationships benefiting all parties
- Academic neutrality – the institutional role as an honest broker, bringing its expertise to bear on issues of societal importance
- Accessibility – welcoming to all stakeholders
- Integration – the level of institutional commitment to engagement
- Coordination – the organizational structure through which engagement achieves its highest possible ideal
- Resource partnerships – the tangible resources devoted to engagement, both within and outside of the institution.

³ “Returning to Our Roots: The Engaged Institution,” p. 12.

B. UCR's Current Status as an Engaged University

Rooted in its history as an agricultural experiment station and later a general campus of the University of California, UCR has long been an engaged institution. From its founding in 1906, the University of California Citrus Experiment Station in Riverside conducted basic and applied research to ensure the economic vitality of one of Southern California's most important industries. It later expanded its mission to include agricultural, urban and natural resource problems of the state. This engagement was so valued by the Riverside community that, in the late 1940s, a group of Riverside boosters formed the Citizens University Committee with the express purpose of establishing a UC campus in Riverside. To this day, town-gown relations remain extraordinarily positive, in large measure due to an enduring tradition of partnership between the city and the campus. This bond has resulted in a number of collaborations between campus and community, including ARTSblock, the ALPHA Center and the newly formed Southern California Research Initiative for Solar Energy (SC-RISE). Community engagement by UCR has broadened geographically with the opening in 2005 of the Palm Desert Graduate Center.

There are countless examples at UCR of community service, outreach and service learning. In the area of service learning, these include departments that offer academic credit for student fieldwork and internships, the University Honors Program requirement that students perform community service, UCDC academic internship program and other internships and student-initiated groups that are not connected to coursework or unit credit, but reinforce learning that is relevant to academic studies in a community "laboratory" setting.

With regard to research, UCR now has a Coordinator for Undergraduate Research in the Office of Undergraduate Education and many current community outreach initiatives are

UCR Examples

Even without an institution-wide culture of community engagement, UCR nevertheless has many educational, research and scholarly programs that enhance community quality of life. Following are selected examples across the disciplines that illustrate the good work of students, faculty and staff.

ARTSblock: A dynamic arts center in the heart of downtown Riverside, ARTSblock is an integrated complex of two museums and the forthcoming Culver Center of the Arts. It is the result of a community partnership between UCR, the City of Riverside and private philanthropy.

Community Garden: A community service collaboration between UCR, the Salvation Army and the student organization "Sustainable UCR" has resulted in a community garden that provides fresh produce to a local food bank.

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program : Nearly 70 UCR accounting students have logged in excess of 1,000 hours of service learning, as they provide assistance in the preparation of tax returns for individuals on fixed incomes or otherwise unable to complete tax forms.

Desert Lyceum: The Palm Desert Graduate Center engages in public service through its facilitation of the Desert Lyceum. The Lyceum is a private forum that brings together expertise from Coachella Valley community leaders to focus on important Coachella Valley issues.

Federation for a Competitive Economy (FACE): A new community partnership that will connect higher education, K-12 education, government, media, healthcare, labor, business and community-based organizations to improve student learning and prepare a workforce with the skills to compete in a global economy.

Undergraduate Research in the Community: This new service learning program matches UCR students with interested community organizations, non-profits, government agencies and schools for faculty-mentored research and creative activities that have community involvement at their core.

Global Medical Brigades Program: UCR students and local medical professionals travel to underserved areas in other countries, setting up temporary clinics where people can receive medical treatment free of charge. This and a UCR student run health clinic in Riverside are examples of service learning.

CNAS Science Lecture Series, Bourns College of Engineering Distinguished Lecture Series, Palm Desert Graduate Center lecture and film series, CUC: These outreach programs are intended to inform the general public of UCR scholarly work that relates to topical issues.

directly tied to programs funded by federal agencies and foundations. These increase UCR visibility in the community and leverage the campus' desire to achieve the profile of an AAU university. The Center for Conservation Biology regularly collaborates with local regulatory agencies to assist in developing management plans for endangered species. A number of current and past extramurally funded projects have been directed at the recruitment and professional development of mathematics and science teachers in our region, including programs operated through partnerships between the Graduate School of Education, the ALPHA Center, and the College of Natural and Agricultural Sciences. A last example is the new Southern California Research Initiative for Solar Energy (SC-RISE), a partnership between the Bourns College of Engineering, industry members, government agencies, public and private utilities, trade organizations, and academic institutions to develop solar energy materials and technology and to provide information and advice on solar energy.

As part of its work, the Community Engagement Committee invited members of community stakeholder groups with which committee members interact to complete an online questionnaire called "A Candid Look at UCR." Most of the 146 respondents were from either the immediate Riverside area or the Coachella Valley. Most had a connection to UCR and positive impressions of the campus' involvement with the community. Many respondents identified a connection to one specific program, such as ARTSblock, science lectures, Extension programs, or tutoring programs for school-age children. A general impression among respondents in the Riverside area is that UCR is an economic driver that provides employment, brings the latest research to the community, and draws people who are educated, socially conscious, and culturally aware. A representative comment described UCR as "the best hope for communities to deal in positive way to challenges of dynamic, diverse population." Several respondents acknowledged their appreciation that some members of the campus are involved in local committees and organizations. Others called for increased involvement in local activities and events by the UCR community and increased opportunities for UCR partnerships with organizations and businesses.

However, written comments from respondents in the Riverside area also revealed two criticisms. First, several respondents commented on their difficulty in finding information about events at UCR or UCR activities in the community (*i.e.*, lack of a comprehensive listing or point of general contact). Second, many comments were related to problems associated with the cost and perceived difficulty of parking on campus. This comment illustrates the range of concerns:

"For those not in the know the campus can seem intimidating. Questions like where to park, why it costs so much, where do I go once I have parked the car, etc., are a deterrent."

The vast majority (84 percent) of Coachella Valley survey respondents were interested in music and arts, followed by 56 percent who were interested in outreach and advocacy. Among Coachella Valley respondents, over half of whom were retired (90% over age 45) there was a general perception that UCR's only presence in the valley is the Palm Desert Graduate Center. The center seems to represent a hope that UCR will eventually contribute to education of the youth and the economic development of the Valley. There is considerable appreciation for the cultural events that UCR sponsors at the center but this appreciation was often qualified with the term "free."

Comments from respondents regarding San Jacinto Valley, Corona, Ontario, Southwest Riverside County, the high desert, and San Bernardino area suggest that UCR should consider a plan for engagement with each of its relatively nearby communities.

Although e-mail requests to complete the online community survey were sent to more than 2,000 people who are connected to organizations that our community members could reach, the response rate was less than 10 percent. Strategic sampling and follow-up requests were not possible, given the committee's short timeline. Nevertheless the feedback received was useful to the committee's work. Regular and purposeful sampling across several demographic characteristics regarding UCR's community engagement is suggested as part of the strategic plan.

Two hundred faculty responded to another survey (consisting of just two questions) conducted by the Community Engagement Committee. These results indicated that faculty, too, recognize the value of UCR's community engagement. Fifty-two percent of faculty rated community engagement as important or very important, and another 27 percent consider community engagement to be a key to UCR's success. When asked to rate UCR's current level of commitment to community engagement, 39 percent of faculty respondents reported that UCR has some notable, strategic engagement initiatives. Another 44 percent responded that "most engagement activities involve the individual effort of students, faculty or staff." In contrast, only 3 percent of faculty think UCR has a focused commitment to community engagement.

Thus, while UCR has many exceptional initiatives that meet the Kellogg Foundation's definition of community engagement, these occur in a distributed and *ad hoc* manner under the leadership of deeply committed individuals and organizations on our campus. In order for UCR to fully achieve its mission, community engagement should attain institutional-level commitment and effort. Indeed, in Chancellor White's charge to the planning committees for *UCR 2020: The Path to Preeminence*, several of the articulated goals for the campus relate to community engagement.

Strengths and Opportunities for UCR in Community Engagement

To build an even stronger community engagement profile, UCR starts from a position of great potential, already benefiting from many strengths characteristic of engaged universities. Additionally, there are many opportunities on which UCR can build.

UCR's land-grant heritage and standing as a research university provide a strong platform for deepening engagement with the community, as does its exceptional community relations in Riverside. The campus' broad menu of academic programs can provide fertile fields to sow new community engagement alliances. UCR's nationally recognized diversity enhances our capability to engage with the multi-cultural and multi-national stakeholders that comprise our regional, national and international constituents.

As demonstrated by the Community Engagement Committee's stakeholder questionnaire, there remains enormous community interest in being involved with UCR, including communities beyond the immediate Riverside area. Within Riverside, the newly adopted strategic vision for the city, "Seizing Our Destiny: The Agenda for Riverside's Innovative Future,"⁴ outlines a call to action that

⁴ Strategic Vision Steering Committee, chaired by David W. Stewart, Dean, A. Gary Anderson Graduate School of Management, UCR, and the greater Riverside community. "Seizing Our Destiny: The Agenda for Riverside's Innovative Future." December 2009.

suggests university engagement on a number of levels including education, technology transfer, workforce development, sustainability, arts and culture, health care and lifelong learning. Additionally, as one of the most rapidly growing regions in the U.S., Inland Southern California has a long list of identified challenges for which targeted research and service learning can make a difference (*e.g.*, low college-going rate, limited health care access, air quality and habitat concerns, and job creation).

From UCR's perspective, there are vast opportunities in community engagement to enrich the educational and research enterprises of the campus. Inland Southern California provides a "living laboratory" for research and learning, with great potential for new partnerships and alliances to enhance research and education. UCR's diverse student body presents the opportunity to deepen cultural and other educational experiences in the community. Additionally, alumni ties to UCR can be strengthened through community engagement. The emphasis by funding agencies and organizations on relevance improves the prospects of securing extramural funding to support community engagement activities. With the new effort to conduct formal reviews of undergraduate programs, develop alternative breadth concentrations, and respond to a WASC recommendation that UCR review its general education requirements, there will be many opportunities to develop new service learning courses that offer experiential learning. At the same time, the discussion of community engagement provides an opening to reexamine and revise the merit/promotion process for faculty and performance management for staff. Finally, by demonstrating UCR's value to the region and state, a high visibility engagement program will engender greater support in our advocacy and development efforts.

C. Criteria for Assessing Potential Engagement Programs

As UCR raises its community engagement profile, it will be advisable to develop criteria for evaluating a potential engagement activity/program prior to committing campus resources and making a commitment to implementation. The ten criteria listed below reflect characteristics of community engagement that are consistent with our vision for UCR as an engaged institution. It is important to note that exemplary programs are not expected to meet all criteria. The purpose of these criteria is to provide a mechanism for the systematic evaluation of programs that is tied directly to the campus vision for engagement. It is also important to acknowledge that there will, and should, be many activities that do not come across the assessment radar because they represent the good work of individual units or campus organizations, or individual efforts of civically engaged faculty, students and staff. These criteria provide a framework that will support, and in some instances, help to coordinate an institutional culture of community engagement.

The ten criteria for evaluating current and proposed engagement programs are presented below in the form of questions:

Will the proposed engagement activity:

- Capitalize on unique characteristics and existing capabilities of UCR as a research university (*e.g.*, its academic perspective, its reputation as university, etc.)?
- Reflect a campus-wide commitment, not the *ad hoc* actions of individuals or individual entities?

- Be of significant magnitude or scope of impact?
- Have relevancy to Inland Southern California?
- Support and enhance another strategic direction (in other words, create focus toward overall strategic vision not diffusion of efforts)?
- Integrate economic and community development through UCR's position as a research university (*e.g.*, education, workforce development, arts and culture)?
- Serve as a point of distinction for UCR and as a model for other universities?
- Foster collaboration across diverse entities with complementary strengths both internally and externally?
- Contribute to and not diminish UCR's reputation and brand?
- Result in a clear mutual benefit for both the campus and the community?

III. Developing an Organizational Culture and Partnerships Reflecting Commitment to Community Engagement

If community engagement is to be a “mission-critical” activity of UCR in its role as a land grant university, we must bring our considerable intellectual resources to bear on societal needs, but do so in a manner that also facilitates and enhances the research and teaching missions of the campus. This means that UCR should seek partners that provide opportunities for research and/or teaching, in their broadest sense, while also embracing research and teaching that is relevant to a community issue, problem or need. Engagement is therefore a form of scholarship that cuts across teaching, research, and service, blending these activities with experiential knowledge within the community.

The Community Engagement Committee makes two recommendations, discussed below, related to fostering a campus culture of commitment to community engagement and developing community partnerships.

A. Recommendation 1: Create and Support an Organizational Culture that Reflects UCR's Commitment to Community Engagement

As a land grant university, UCR must have community engagement as part of its “DNA.” This means that community engagement must be an appreciated and rewarded part of the responsibilities of all members of the UCR community: faculty, students, staff and administrators. Toward this end, UCR should:

- Establish models of leadership by requiring the senior leadership of the campus to become involved in relevant community engagement activities.
- Encourage faculty and staff to live in the Inland Southern California region and become active participants in the Inland community.
- Provide professional development for faculty, staff and students in community-based research and learning methods.
- Routinely solicit community input and disseminate information throughout the campus regarding engagement opportunities.
- Seek resources from multiple sources to support community-based initiatives.

- Create a seamless educational experience for UC-eligible students from K-12 to graduation from UCR.
- Be the region’s institution of choice for lifelong learning opportunities.

B. Recommendation 2: Establish Partnerships and Alliances with Business, Government, Education, Arts, and Other Groups that Are Productive and Mutually Beneficial

UCR should seek partners that contribute to an environment of co-learning and co-creation of knowledge that will enhance the scholarship and educational experience of campus while contributing to the solution of important societal and community problems. UCR’s engagement partners should, or should have the potential to, enable faculty members to be better scholars, enhance the learning experiences of students, and leverage UCR’s impact and influence on other constituencies and partners.

UCR should engage its partners in shared decision making. The campus should actively listen to all stakeholders, embrace the diversity of the many communities it serves, and reach out to partners including those who have not previously been engaged. Within its domain of expertise, UCR should seek to be the partner and resource of choice when dealing with societal and community issues. In some cases, a proposed partnership will not match UCR’s areas of expertise—in such cases it may not be a good idea for UCR to develop an alliance with a community business or organization.

In order to assure the realization of its obligation for community engagement, UCR should identify specific partners with whom it will actively engage. These partners may be defined in terms of such attributes as geographic regions, interest and expertise, professional organizations, age and ethnicity. The campus community should be encouraged to develop relationships with organizations that reflect the ethnic and cultural diversity of Inland Southern California.

As part of this strategy of developing and managing engagement partnerships, UCR should proactively communicate its mission, expertise, and resource commitments and constraints to partners. It will assure that partners recognize the importance of, and participate in, the evaluation of the effectiveness of engagement activities through traditional measures of academic excellence as well as impact on the community. Partners will share a sense of public accountability and of the importance of reciprocal benefits.

More specifically, it is recommended that UCR:

- Establish a strong and respected position among community opinion leaders for its active participation in community issues.
- Assure that the Chancellor, Vice Chancellors, Deans and other senior administrators and faculty members are actively engaged in the advancement of Inland Southern California through leadership roles in the community and serve as models for university-community partnerships.
- Collaborate with state and local agencies on matters affecting the community.
- Maintain membership in national organizations of urban- and metropolitan-serving universities that allows UCR to learn from peers and to contribute to their knowledge.

- Be a leader in a strong network of affiliated commercial organizations, government entities, educational institutions and private foundations that link the campus to its external communities in a powerful way.
- Identify alumni leaders in each entity (*e.g.*, business, government, education, athletics and arts) and engage them in the establishment of alliances and partnerships.

IV. Engagement and Academic Programs, Research, and Faculty Incentives

UCR must create a fertile environment in which students, faculty, and staff have as many opportunities as possible to learn and serve, give of themselves and enter into caring relationships with others. The steady growth and eventual inter-socialization of service learning will transform our university from an isolated repository of talent, knowledge and resources to central agents for civic peace, social justice and community understanding. To this end, we must encourage and support projects that benefit and involve the community, while teaching students things they would not learn in the classroom, such as how the concepts they have been studying are applied and play out in “the real world.”

Engagement is already seen as a valued principle by UCR faculty. Only 1.6 percent responded that engagement is not important and can be a distraction to our mission. A sampling of faculty comments includes the following:

- “All UC campuses need to be much more engaged with their regions...We need a much stronger presence at various community and regional events, and the campus needs to advertise and brand itself far more extensively. It needs to provide students as interns as much as possible in as many places as possible...”
- “We are heavily supported by taxpayers, and strengthening our relationships with local governments and community organizations is critical to the future success of this campus.”

In the area of academic programs, the Community Engagement Committee recommends establishing and supporting engagement strategies in programs and research by developing: meaningful and distinctive educational experiences and opportunities; research programs that create knowledge through community engagement or that are of direct relevance to the community; and incentives to recognize and reward community engagement by faculty. A discussion of each recommendation follows.

A. Recommendation 3: Develop Academic Programs that Provide both Meaningful and Distinctive Educational Experiences and Opportunities for Community Engagement

As a first step, UCR should engage faculty in discussions about service learning, leading to the development of new service learning courses across campus. Every undergraduate student should have the opportunity to be involved in some community engagement activity (*e.g.*, service learning course, community engagement research project, structured volunteerism, internship) that has a true academic component.

In order to achieve this recommendation, the campus should create a structure that helps university educators connect with community members who might be interested in interacting with students.

At the same time, internship programs available in many majors should be expanded and enhanced and new majors with strong community engagement components created. UCR should also examine the value of integrating service learning into the writing program by incorporating service learning and writing about community service into the exercises in the required lower-division writing courses. Additional interdisciplinary graduate programs that focus on solving societal problems can also be created. Linkages with the Career Center should be strengthened to increase the number of internship opportunities identified and to utilize effective mechanisms to match undergraduate students with faculty mentors. Guidelines should be developed to monitor quality of internship experiences to assure students are doing work that is relevant to their academic programs.

Faculty ought to be encouraged to explore, within the constructs of the courses that they currently teach, whether it would be advantageous to bring in members of the community with unique knowledge appropriate to the course. UCR should consider creating a title, such as “volunteer community faculty” to which these individuals would be appointed to serve as guest instructors in academic courses or programs. By giving members of our community special consideration and appointments, it would both improve the relationship that the campus has with the community as well as bring real-world knowledge and experience in to a number of our coursework settings currently on the campus. Finally, a mechanism should be developed for faculty to be recognized and rewarded for serving as internship mentors in the merit and promotion process. This could include giving formal credit for this form of teaching in a manner equivalent to the credit that is given for traditional classroom teaching.

B. Recommendation 4: Develop Research Programs that Create Knowledge through Engaging the Community or that are of Direct Relevance to the Community

UCR should encourage and facilitate research, by faculty as well as by graduate/undergraduate students that engages the community in some aspect of the research – from problem identification to prioritization to assisting with data collection. Community engagement components of research projects should be truly integrated into the projects, rather than added on at the end simply to fulfill a requirement of the funding agency.

There should be a measurable increase in the number of faculty who submit grant proposals that have a community engagement component, and within the next several years, UCR should secure significant extramural funding that supports research that involves community engagement.

A process that makes it easier for researchers and community members who might benefit from collaboration to find each other (see Section V) would stimulate more research-based community engagement, as would incentives and financial support for faculty doing research involving the community. It would be helpful if there were staff members who were familiar with the grant opportunities available for this kind of research, who could assist faculty in obtaining grants. These staff members could also facilitate efforts to get grants for graduate and undergraduate research involving community collaborations.

C. **Recommendation 5: Create Incentives to Recognize and Reward Appropriate and Relevant Community Engagement by Faculty**

The University's fundamental missions are teaching, research and public service. According to the University of California's website, "We provide public service, which dates back to UC's origins as a land grant institution in the 1860s. Today, through its public service programs and industry partnerships, UC disseminates research results and translates scientific discoveries into practical knowledge and technological innovations that benefit California and the nation."⁵ However, there is little incentive for faculty members to engage in service beyond that provided to the University itself or to their professional disciplines. The reality is that professional rewards for the kind of research that involves community engagement can be rare – there is a great deal of pressure on researchers to do basic research, and it can be challenging to identify projects that meet the basic research goals as well as involve individuals and groups in the community. Therefore, the merit and promotion process should reflect the mission of the university as research, teaching, *and public service*, especially where public service intersects with research and teaching.

The current draft of the proposed College of Natural and Agricultural Sciences' Community Engagement Strategic Planning Committee provides several suggestions for recognizing active faculty involvement in community engagement. This plan can serve as a model for the Academic Senate and other Schools and Colleges as faculty incentives and rewards are considered. For instance, the CNAS committee identified several possible approaches, including: more emphasis upon community engagement in merit reviews, promotions and tenure evaluations; creation of a separate community engagement section in the faculty merit/promotion file; teaching or university service load offsets for large-scale community engagement activities; mini-grants to fund exceptional engagement projects; and salary augmentation for faculty taking on administrative oversight of community engagement efforts. Additionally, there could be consideration given to incentivizing faculty by returning to them overhead generated by community engagement grants, providing a small stipend to faculty who teach service learning and internship courses, and rewarding academic programs that require engagement.

V. **Creating Institutional Capacity that Strategically Promotes Community Engagement**

For UCR to realize its full potential as an engaged university, not only should engagement be a central theme in the university's strategic plan, but this goal should be underpinned by specific action that support the institutional value. In "Returning to our Roots: The Engaged Institution," the Kellogg Commission emphasizes the importance of leadership in community engagement:

Making engagement real on our campuses will require broad strategies to identify community needs, catalogue community resources, highlight academic strengths and capacities, and coordinate the work of many individuals and groups, frequently over long periods of time. There are no quick fixes or painless solutions for many of the challenges our states and communities face.

⁵ <http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/aboutuc/mission.html>.

It is therefore recommended that the campus establish, *as resources permit*, an Office of Community Engagement to act as a coordinating unit for engagement and to develop additional sources of funding to support it. A discussion of structure, function and capacity building follows.

A. Recommendation 6: Create and Support an Organizational Infrastructure that Promotes Community Engagement

In recognition of the current fiscal environment, it is recommended that the organizational structure and capacity-building evolve as demand for centralized leadership emerges.

In the short term, the goal should be simply to elevate the visibility of UCR's current engagement activities. Toward this end, a semi-formal, internal networking group of faculty, students and staff should be established to serve as a consortium of existing campus expertise. An incumbent academician can be identified to lead this consortium, along with a partial FTE staff support. The work of these two co-captains could be funded from reallocation of FTE and/or resources. Reasonable outcomes for this embryonic implementation phase include: leveraging current activities for greater impact; stimulating a campus-wide culture of engagement ("advance the conversation"); updating and maintaining an inventory of engagement activities; identifying potential extramural funding; and establishing an advisory body on community engagement. The Criteria for Assessing Potential Engagement Programs (see II.C.) should guide the work of these groups.

As a transition toward a fully functioning Office of Community Engagement, significant new or expanded community engagement initiatives should be undertaken, and initial extramural funding should be achieved. During this period, perhaps institutional seed funding and challenge grants could be allocated to incubate the Office of Community Engagement. Cultivation of potential individual or foundation donors should also commence.

The Office of Community Engagement: Structure and Function

This proposed central unit acts in support of existing engagement activities throughout the university and as a direct coordinating office for programs of high campus/community importance and impact. Because of the complexity of engagement and the extent to which it permeates many university activities, this unit should report directly to the Chancellor or Provost and be led by an administrator with academic credentials. In addition to a central unit, it is critical to add engagement responsibility to a representative from each major academic unit and other senior administrators so that the theme and activity of engagement spreads throughout the university. These persons serve as points of contact for coordination and for establishing new engagement initiatives.

An advisory body comprised of internal and external stakeholder interests (*e.g.*, education, environment, arts/culture, business/economic development, health, and athletics) should be established. Among its charges should be gathering community perspectives on planned engagement initiatives, assessing the effectiveness of engagement activities, sharpening campus focus on engagement and assisting in fundraising.

Functions of the Office of Community Engagement should include:

- Implementing elements of the campus strategic plan for engagement, as appropriate.
- Facilitating new community engagement alliances, according to strategic direction.
- Coordinating existing campus engagement initiatives.
- Maintaining an inventory of community engagement activities and service-learning courses.
- Serving as a point-of-contact – a “matchmaker” – for community stakeholders seeking UCR engagement and for researchers, educators and students seeking community partners.
- Developing resources to carry out responsibilities of the office.
- Marketing and communication, specifically building internal/external awareness through print, web, signage and social media platforms, in coordination with Strategic Communications and other units as appropriate. Materials should be multi-lingual.
- Assessing community engagement initiatives.
- Developing strategies to make it easier for students to leave and return to campus for engagement activities between classes.
- Establishing and awarding a Chancellor’s Award for Community Engagement to recognize exemplary actions by faculty, students and staff.
- Encouraging campus departments and organizations to continue and expand their own initiatives that serve community interests.

The Criteria for Assessing Potential Engagement Programs (see Section II.C) should guide the work of the Office of Community Engagement. These criteria should also be useful for periodic evaluations of existing programs.

B. Recommendation 7: Develop Capacity to Support Community Engagement

Institutions that have made community engagement a high priority remain challenged in securing stable funding for these efforts. According to the Kellogg Foundation, institutions have pursued funding from special state allocations, the philanthropic community, government granting agencies and internal university resources. UCR could and should pursue all of these sources. Additionally, the Community Engagement Committee suggests additional capacity-building ideas, such as allocating a small percentage of indirect cost recovery to support community engagement and seeking partnerships and grants (*e.g.*, federal, state, local and foundation) to support individual engagement projects.

C. Recommendation 8: Encourage Campus Departments and Organizations to Continue and Expand their Outreach and Public Service Initiatives

For the purposes of strategic planning, the Community Engagement Committee focused on community engagement as defined in Section II of this report, where initiatives are characterized by reciprocity and mutual benefit to both the community and the university. While many of UCR's interactions with the community do not fit this definition, the committee nevertheless recognizes there is great value for the community in the many outreach and public service events and programs that many members of the UCR community have developed and in which they are involved. Campus departments and organizations should be encouraged to continue and expand these activities, as they are consistent with the public service mission of the University of California and

of UC Riverside as a land-grant university, and they expand students' understanding of societal issues and their role in improving the quality of life in a community.

VI. Recommendation 9: Develop a Strategy for Engagement and Outreach to Regions Distant from UCR Facilities

There is vast, untapped potential for community engagement and public service activities in areas not in the immediate vicinity of the Riverside campus (*e.g.*, Southwest Riverside County, San Bernardino, Corona, High Desert, Coachella Valley), including areas that are beyond practical driving distance from UCR or the Palm Desert Graduate Center (*e.g.*, alumni chapters across the U.S. and nations where UCR has a research and/or Extension presence). The Community Engagement Committee recommends that UCR develop strategies for connecting with neighboring Southern California regions outside the immediate Riverside area and other parts of California, the nation, and world where UCR has a presence, through community engagement, outreach, and public service. In the case of outreach and public service, it may be appropriate to include the University Advancement unit in the development of strategies for different regions.