

Understanding Perceptions of University of Delaware's Community Engagement: Feedback from Students

Authors:

Allison Karpyn, PhD
Tara Tracy, BS
Kathleen McCallops, MS
Henry Wolgast
Iyanna McCoy, BS
Nicole Miller

CRESP is committed to addressing education and social policy challenges with rigorous, relevant research.

The Center for Research in Education and Social Policy (CRESP) within the College of Education and Human Development at the University of Delaware conducts rigorous research, program evaluation, and policy analysis to help policymakers and practitioners in education, community health and human services determine which policies and programs are most promising to improve outcomes for children, youth, adults and families.

Founded in 2013, CRESP recognizes that poverty, educational achievement, and chronic disease prevention are intertwined in a complex social web that challenges communities and policymakers alike. CRESP's mission, values, and scientific priorities seek to inform program and policy development across local, state, and federal levels. We work alongside program professionals, academic leaders, and students to foster engagement in high-quality, practice-driven research and evaluation. CRESP researchers are trained in evaluation methodology, randomized field experiments, natural experiments, qualitative methods, statistical analysis, mixed-method evaluation and survey research.

Please feel free to contact us should you have any questions about us or our research.

Center for Research in Education and Social Policy
University of Delaware
Pearson Hall, Suite 107
125 Academy Street
Newark, DE 19716
cresp-info@udel.edu
(302) 831-2928

cresp.udel.edu
Twitter: @udcresp

CRESP Leadership Team

Henry May, Director (hmay@udel.edu)
Allison Karpyn, Senior Associate Director (karpyn@udel.edu)
Sue Giancola, Senior Associate Director (giancola@udel.edu)
Jeff Klein, Associate Director (kleinjef@udel.edu)

Suggested Citation

Karpyn, A., McCallops, K., Wolgast, H., Tracy, T., McCoy, I., & Miller, N. (July 2020). *Understanding Perceptions of University of Delaware's Community Engagement: Feedback from Students (T20-014)*. Newark, DE: Center for Research in Education and Social Policy.

UNDERSTANDING PERCEPTIONS OF UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE'S COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: FEEDBACK FROM STUDENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to current efforts to measure and understand community engagement, the Community Engagement Initiative (CEI) at the University of Delaware (UD) developed open-source, community engagement survey tools to collect data regarding community engagement across three key stakeholder groups: (1) students, (2) faculty and staff, and (3) community partners. Development of the survey tools was driven by creation of a logic model, incorporation of other models and surveys, and consideration of overarching goals (e.g., creating mutually beneficial ties between institutions and communities). This report presents data, collected in the Fall of 2019, from the from the faculty and staff survey, which included both quantitative and qualitative questions.

The following are the major quantitative findings of the student survey:

- 86% reported that that equity matters to UD when it comes to their community work;
- 87% stated that UD supports K-12 education in the state;
- 89% agreed or strongly agreed that UD supports arts and cultural activities in the state;
- 86% reported that UD supports community-based public health in the state; and
- 86% stated that community-minded students are supported by UD faculty.

The following are the major qualitative findings of the student survey:

- Students often reported on the strengths of UD's community engagement efforts, such as examples of how UD actively engages with the surrounding community;
- In addition, students identified weaknesses of and barriers to community engagement at UD, such as lack of transportation, living off-campus/far away from campus, and lack of advertising community engagement opportunities; and
- Furthermore, respondents provided recommendations to improve community engagement at UD by increasing awareness of current initiatives and increasing participation by engaging the entire campus.

Based on these findings, we provide recommendations and reflections to strengthen UD's community engagement efforts as part of UD's commitment to its Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching designation:

1. Clarify and expand awareness of what community engagement is, why it is valued, and how it can look across colleges and departments, as well as student groups (such as XX).
2. Consider a community engagement regular feature in The Review and UDaily.

3. Identify one central web-based location where community engagement activities and opportunities across the University can be located.
4. Clarify how students can work in coordination with and support established partnerships.
5. Re-visit terminology related to civic engagement, partnerships, and community engagement to ensure consistency in messaging across the University.
6. Increase transportation and additional accessibility resources to facilitate students' ability to participate in community engagement activities.
7. Create professional development learning opportunities for students (i.e., materials at orientation), perhaps in coordination with Registered Student Organization (RSO) leaders, to advance students' understanding of community engagement at UD, such as what the partnerships are and how to become involved.

STUDENT – COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT

INTRODUCTION

Measuring the breadth and depth of an institution's community engagement and the efficacy of its collaborative efforts is an essential task for the future of community engagement, also known as civic engagement. The Community Engagement Initiative (CEI) at the University of Delaware (UD) has developed a set of tools for measuring a University's institutional community engagement across three key stakeholder groups: (1) students, (2) faculty and staff, and (3) community partners. The toolkit is made up of a logic model and three distinct surveys, one for each identified stakeholder group. Survey questions are distinctly mapped from the logic model's short- and long-term objectives for improving institutional capacity for community engagement. Annual surveys are electronically distributed to each of the stakeholder groups to inform and improve the University's community engagement efforts. This toolkit is the first freely accessible ongoing tool to assess and improve institutional community engagement and aims to improve reciprocally beneficial relationships between institutions and the communities in which they are engaged.

BACKGROUND AND BRIEF HISTORY

Universities globally are embracing civic engagement as an important component of their work. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has designated 359 out of 5,000 higher education institutions in the U.S. as civically engaged organizations, a number which continues to increase (Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, 2020). UD was formally recognized by the Carnegie Foundation for outstanding community engagement in 2015, 1 of 67 public institutions nationally that hold this designation. UD's classification was garnered by the CEI, which seeks to expand the University's role in cultivating active citizens through partnerships that impact civic needs and fostering reciprocally beneficial relationships between the University and the communities where it is engaged.

Yet such efforts are not simple undertakings, and to do well, require more than a default documentation. A well-designed assessment approach must clarify purpose and aims, while advancing the quality of the effort along with supporting a common understanding of goals and objectives. An integrated approach to assessment is one mechanism to help establish a common definition of success, yet with such overarching substantial efforts being undertaken across stakeholder groups including students, faculty and staff, and community partners, via a similar breadth of interwoven activities which overlap across the areas of research, teaching, and service (including from a community member perspective) measuring such efforts can be daunting.

Further, data can be utilized to serve multiple purposes, informing not only the CEI's progress, but also supporting learning objectives, research needs and department or center-based evaluation needs.

UD's community engagement leaders identified one of the major challenges in transitioning from community involvement to sustained and visible community engagement to be the development of a strategic process for the regular, systematic and standardized collection of information on community engagement activities. Since then, the evaluation team has developed a toolkit aligning indicators and outcomes from a comprehensive logic model to formulate survey questions, identified key sources of data from which progress can be monitored and tracked, and collected survey data from three key stakeholder groups to inform and improve the University's community engagement using these systematic measurable tools.

Institutional civic engagement is important in establishing mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the community where it is located. Establishing mutually beneficial relationships requires not only continued engagement efforts but also community partners' trust that institutional partners have their best interests in mind. Higher education has long been involved in community engagement efforts yet there has largely been a lack of systematic, quantitative and qualitative analysis of the effectiveness, coordination, accessibility, and perception of these efforts. Evaluating institutional civic engagement efforts can improve UD's community engagement by providing the CEI and other civic engagement leaders with trends and analysis of stakeholders' perceptions on the effectiveness, accessibility, and scope of engagement efforts.

UD has a long tradition of commitment to community engaged scholarship through applying knowledge and creativity to challenges facing Delaware communities. In 2013, UD's Carnegie Foundation Task Force designed and fielded the first-ever UD Community Engagement Survey to all faculty and staff. These were the first results leveraged to improve the accessibility of community engagement opportunities for faculty and staff.

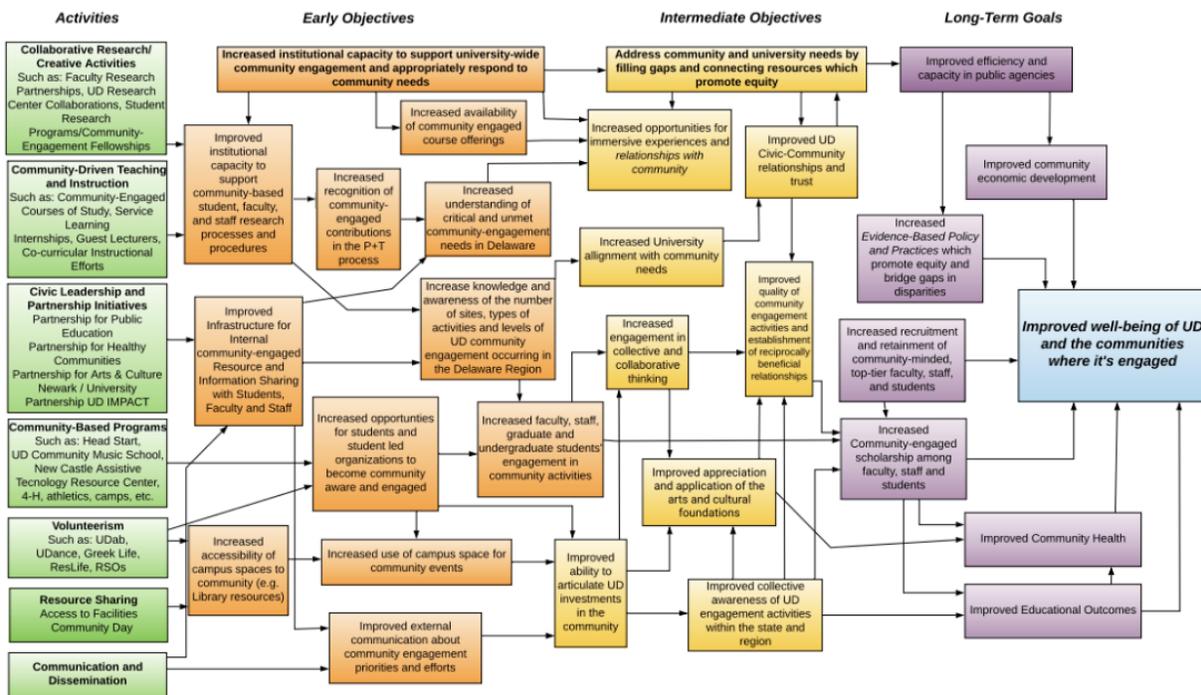
In 2015, the Carnegie Foundation honored UD for its institutional commitment to community engagement. Within the context of the Carnegie Foundation designation, community engaged research has widely defined the purpose of community engagement as "the partnership of college and university knowledge and resources with those of public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching and learning, prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address societal issues; and contribute to the public good" (Civic Engagement Benchmarking Task Force, 2005, p. 2).

The following year, UD's CEI formed to strengthen civic engagement across the institution and its partners. The initiative was formed to strengthen collaboration between UD and its larger community and in doing so, recognize and impact civic needs. In 2017, CEI held quarterly

evaluation meetings to define community needs and identify corresponding data sources. The University’s Civic Action Plan, published in 2017, developed UD’s three key partnership groups, the Partnership for Healthy Communities, the Partnership for Arts and Culture, and the Partnership for Public Education.

In response to a call for ongoing measurement of institutional engagement, the process of developing an evaluation tool began in 2018. The tool development consisted of a seven-step process, further detailed in the Methods section, resulting in a comprehensive logic model, aligning outcomes and indicators of community engagement, see Figure 1, as well as surveys for the three identified stakeholder groups. Survey data collected from UD students, faculty and staff, and community partners was utilized to directly measure the objectives identified in the logic model; though additional data was also collected from other existing sources (i.e., research and administrative sources).

Figure 1. Community Engagement Logic Model



The authors of this report intend for this data to be used within the context of the logic model, to inform and improve the community engagement work to meet UD’s goals for its CEI. Further, these tools were developed to support mutually beneficial community engagement among similar institutions.

METHOD

SURVEY DEVELOPMENT

Survey development consisted of a seven-step process to ensure that survey questions were comprehensive, aligned with former tools, all while remaining succinct to increase participants' response rates. The first step began in 2018 by reviewing all available materials and documents which described the purpose and intent of the civic engagement work at UD. These tools included UD's 2017 Civic Action Plan as well as the mission statements and ongoing engagement efforts of partnership groups. In order to begin gathering data that would assess engagement efforts, an inventory of community engagement efforts by faculty, staff, students, and community partners was simultaneously established using academic colleges as key information providers.

As the second step in survey development, the research team conducted a literature review on strategies for evaluating institutional community engagement and by reviewing the work of other community-engaged institutions. While a limited number of tools were identified, those resources identified were not equipped to assess community partner perception of institutional engagement.

The third step involved using prior tools and partnership feedback as guides to develop short- and long-term objectives of community engagement. The process included a committee of individuals, with input from partnership groups of the CEI, resulting in clearly articulated objectives for the effort so that the appropriate data could be identified and trends could be tracked. Objectives were largely defined by a myriad of data sources and partner evaluations of community needs. Short- and long-term objectives were identified that would increase the capacity for members of the UD community members to participate in community engagement within and beyond UD's campus. These objectives were then mapped to long-term goals that focus on the continual development and measurement of: (1) high-quality community engagement activities; (2) community-engaged scholarship among faculty, staff, students, community partners; and (3) improved well-being of UD and the communities where it is engaged. These objectives and goals were utilized to create a logic model, a visual guide to the outline and timeline of the objectives and goals for community engagement.

Objectives were mapped to indicators for each survey group, comprising the fourth step in the survey development process. Working evaluation meetings occurred regularly with each of the three CEI partnership groups (Education, Arts and Culture, and Community Health), to clarify objectives and work toward measurable, standardized indicators. Data collection mechanisms were identified to assess these indicators, with the goal of capturing existing data as well as understanding the best mechanisms for accessing existing data on campus and in the community. Survey questions were developed in the fifth step of survey development through both reviewing

existing tools and developing unique questions tailored to UD and surrounding communities. The sixth step involved survey question review by leadership at UD across all partnership teams, and the final step consisted of question piloting with a subset of students, faculty, staff and community partners. Confusing or potentially redundant questions were eliminated or refined, and the second round of piloting took place.

The student survey is 28 questions and three pages long and contains both qualitative open-ended questions and quantitative questions (see Appendix for entire survey). The student survey has three primary objectives: (1) understand the perceived ease by which students can become involved in community engaged research and scholarship, (2) measure the quantity of existing opportunities for participation in community engagement, and (3) assess student awareness of specific active institutional community engagement programs.

Survey data collected from UD students will be utilized to directly measure the objectives identified in the logic model; though additional data is also collected from other existing sources (i.e., research and administrative sources). Within the context of the logic model, this data informs and improves the work to meet UD's goals for its CEI. Further, we have developed the tools with the intention of dissemination, supporting mutually beneficial community engagement.

PARTICIPANTS

Respondents were identified for the student survey using UD internal lists. Student survey was sent to all current undergraduate and graduate students and included a screener question to determine if participants were 18 years old. Participants who indicated they were younger than 18 were excluded from participating in the survey. Seven percent (n = 1,756) of students responded to the survey, though 804 submitted complete responses.

Data collection for the student survey consisted of email contact and reminders from UD's Provost, Dr. Robin Morgan, after which the survey remained open for approximately two months. All students were contacted by Provost Morgan in September 2019 and asked to participate in the respective surveys via email. Surveys were created and administered through Qualtrics and remained open from September through November, during which Provost Morgan emailed participation reminders to the student body.

SURVEY QUESTIONS

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Students were not allowed to complete the rest of the survey if they answered that they were under 18. While survey participants remained anonymous, students responded to a series of demographic characteristic questions which provide insight into respondent's gender, college and

departmental affiliation, and year of study. These questions were unique to the student survey. Responses give insight into the general demographic landscape of student respondents.

OVERALL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WORK

Across all three surveys, respondents were asked to give a rating on a 10-point Likert scale from 1 (poor) to 10 (excellent) of UD's community engagement work, and they were asked to assess their attitude towards UD's work in the community, whether it has improved, declined, or stayed the same.

THINKING ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES

Students were also asked to rate the extent to which they would agree with 17 statements regarding the effectiveness, scope, and communication of community engagement efforts on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). These questions gauge students' perception of the University's civic engagement work. For example, "It is easy for me to complete necessary paperwork to become approved to participate in community-based research experiences with children. (i.e., criminal background checks)" and "I have worked with a community group or partner while at UD". Many of these questions are common across all three surveys, allowing for comparison between groups. For example, "Equity matters to UD when it comes to its community work" and "UD does not understand the critical or unmet needs of communities in Delaware".

EXTENT OF ENGAGEMENT

Respondents were asked five questions about the extent of students' community engagement over the past year, requiring respondents to quantify the frequency of their collaborative efforts (e.g., "In the past 12 months, how many presentations have you attended regarding community engaged scholarship?") and the nature of their community engaged work. In addition, respondents were asked to quantify the number of engaged courses they have taken, the number of community engaged activities they have participated in, and the number of presentations they have given regarding community engaged scholarship. Students were also prompted to give a yes or no answer to their involvement in a wide variety of community engaged activities available on and off campus.

DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS v26. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the basic features of the data, and provide summaries of the range of variables examined. Initial codes were developed by reading a subsample of responses and using line-by-line coding, and codes continued to be developed and refined throughout the coding process. In order to improve inter-rater reliability and ensure coding accuracy among all three coders, codes were given

an explicit definition. All coding discrepancies were discussed among all three coders and were resolved by reaching a consensus. Salient themes are provided in the Results section.

FINDINGS

QUANTITATIVE

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the sample. Undergraduate students had the highest response rate (79%). Graduate students responded at a much lower rate (19%). The remaining 2% of students picked the “Other” choice and gave explanations of their student status such as auditor or transfer students.

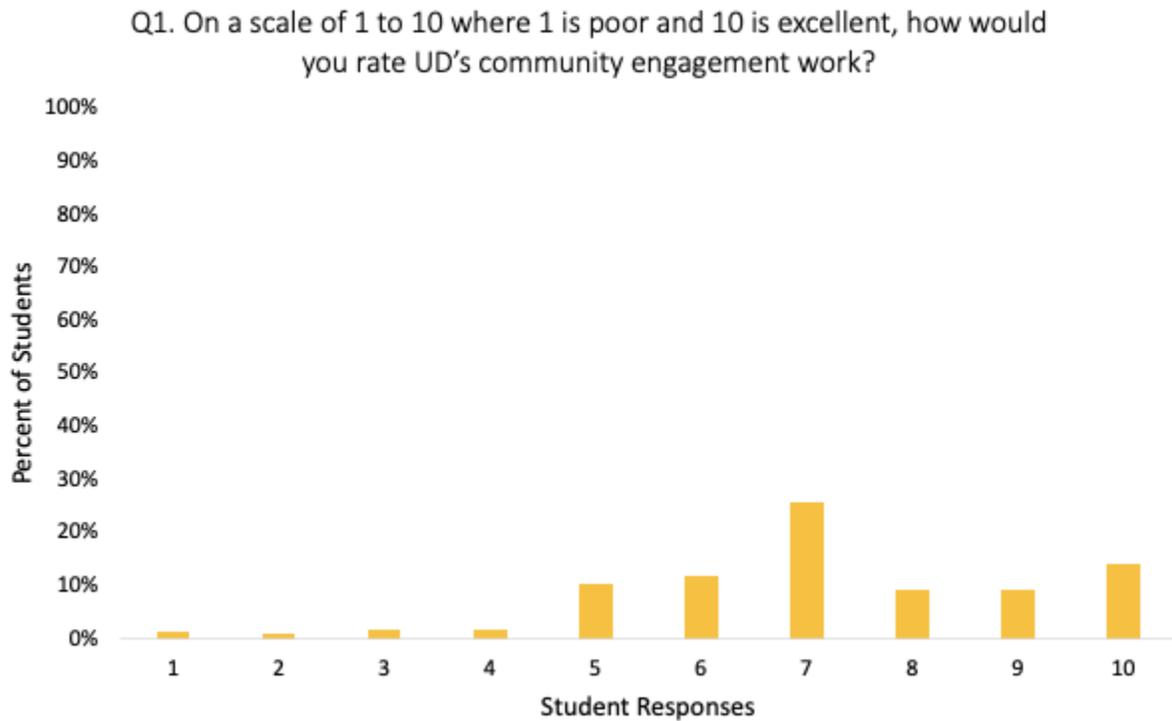
The survey gave eight college affiliations for the students to choose to connect themselves to. The top four college affiliations of student respondents were the College of Arts and Sciences (31%), the College of Engineering (17%), the Alfred Lerner College of Business and Economics (14%), and the College of Health Sciences (11%).

Sixty-three percent of the student respondents identified as female. A screener question identified if student respondents were over eighteen and disallowed the 2% of respondents who were not eighteen from participating.

OVERALL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WORK

Students were asked to rate the university’s community engagement by giving a number on a scale from 1 to 10, a 1 signified poor community engagement while 10 recognized excellent community engagement efforts. Overall, the mean was 7.28 (Mode = 8; SD = 1.882), see Table 2 and Figure 2.

Figure 2. Student Community Engagement Rating, 2019



Additionally, students were asked to reflect upon their attitude towards the university's work in the community within the previous year, and signified whether they felt it improved, declined, or stayed the same. Forty-eight percent of students felt the university's work improved, while only 3% said it declined, see Table 3.

EXPERIENCES WITH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Students were asked to reflect on the past 12 months when responding to the following statements, see Table 4. They then were asked to indicate whether or not they agreed with the statements by choosing numbers on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

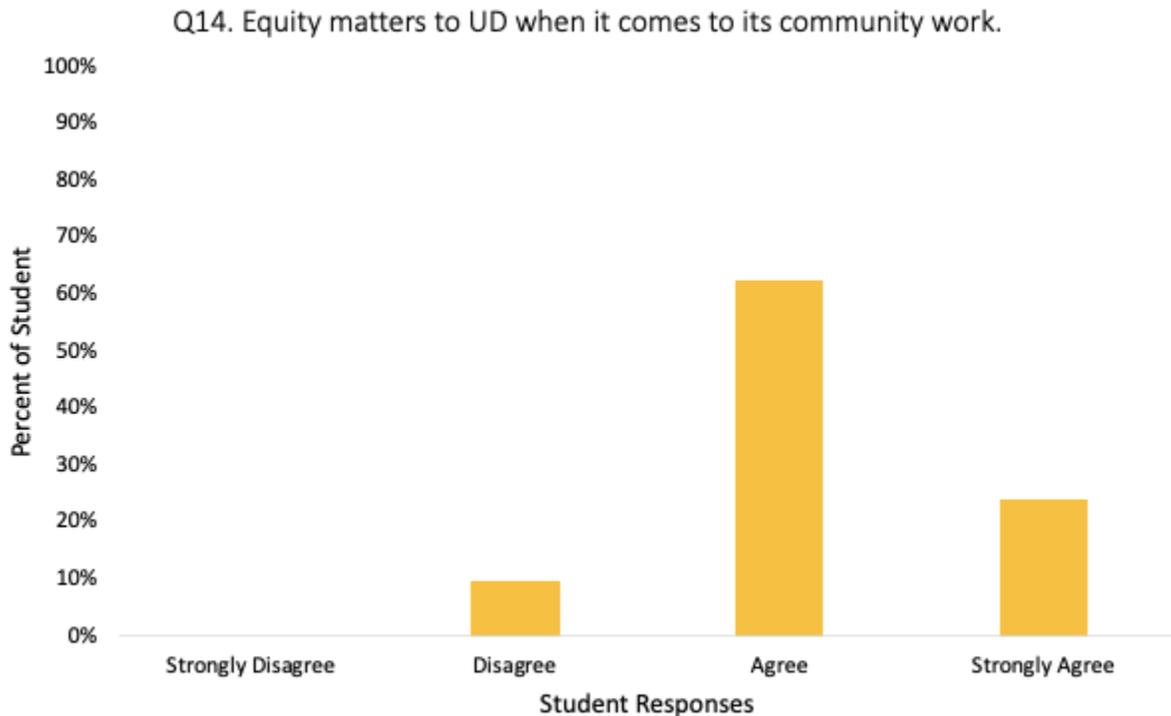
Common trends seen within the data were the students felt that UD did a lot of work within the community, but they did not know how they themselves could become involved in those efforts. Students also thought it was difficult to get involved in community engaged work within their classes. Students were asked if they felt it was easy for them to get involved with research at the university. Of the students who responded, 80% said that they felt they were able to get involved.

Respondents' answers also detailed their involvement in community engagement activities throughout their time at the University. About 52% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they knew how to find courses that are "community engaged", demonstrating a nearly even split between students aware and unaware of community engaged course offerings. Similar trends appeared across other aspects of students' community engagement involved. About 57% of students had worked with a community group or partner and about 56% of students said it was difficult to get involved in off-campus community engagement opportunities supported by the University.

Responses also gaged the degree to which students thought professors support community engagement in their classes. Seventy-nine percent of students agreed or strongly agreed that professors at UD are community minded. An even higher portion of students, 86%, agreed or strongly agreed that community-minded students were supported by the faculty. Fifty-five percent of students however, felt that it was difficult for them to get involved with community-engaged work with UD faculty.

The survey asked students if they thought UD did not understand the critical or unmet needs of communities in Delaware. In total, 61% of the students either disagreed or strongly disagreed, meaning they felt that the University does understand the needs of the community. Furthermore, about 86% of students agreed or strongly agreed that equity matters to UD, see Figure 3.

Figure 3. Student Responses Regarding Equity



Throughout the survey, students were asked if they were aware of various partnerships that the University is involved in. Only 35% of students were aware of the Partnership for Public Education. However, when questioned about the Partnership for Healthy Communities, a slightly higher percentage of students, 43%, were aware of the partnership. A similar rate of 39% of students were aware of the Partnership for Arts and Culture.

Students' answers recognized a broadly favorable perception of UD's involvement with the community. Responses also showed a uniformity of good perceptions across different areas of involvement. About 90% of students agreed or strongly agreed that the University supports arts and cultural activities in the state. Similarly, about 87% of students agreed or strongly agreed that UD supports K-12 education within the state and about 86% of students agreed or strongly agreed that UD supports community-based public health in Delaware. A lesser portion of students, though still the large majority, indicated specific awareness of UD's involvement across Delaware communities. About 65% of student respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had a good sense of the work UD does in the community.

EXTENT OF ENGAGEMENT

Students were asked to reflect on their experiences at UD within the past year, see Table 5. Survey questions directed students to report on the number of courses they had taken that included community outreach or engagement activities. Results indicated very few students had enrolled in

community-engaged courses, $M = .91$, $SD = 1.782$, $Mode = 0$, $Min/Max = 0 - 15$. Most students reported publishing zero articles or reports that would classify as “community-engaged scholarship”, $M = .36$, $SD = 1.728$, $Mode = 0$, $Min/Max = 0 - 29$. Similarly, few students reported giving any presentations regarding community engaged scholarship, $M = .4$, $SD = 1.598$, $Mode = 0$, $Min/Max = 0 - 30$. Additionally, students were asked if they had participated in community-engagement activity through UD which was located off campus and intended to benefit the community. Five percent of the students said they had been involved in community engagement through a study abroad program, 8% had done a community-based research project, 26% completed volunteer work or community service, and 3% had been involved in some other kind of community engagement work. The remaining 58% of student respondents had not participated in a community-engagement activity through UD.

OPEN-ENDED FEEDBACK

Students are generally enthusiastic about the Community Engagement work UD undertakes and see the University as actively engaged with the surrounding community, which for them, is primarily through student groups on campus, and to some extent through courses and research opportunities. However they note concerns for engagement, particularly for those off campus, graduate students, without a car, or with a disability. They want more access to information about how to be involved, and want too, to know more about the ways the work is making a difference.

Students were asked to provide additional thoughts, advice, or feedback about UD’s community engagement. These narrative responses were carefully reviewed using Dedoose™, resulting in twelve themes which were further grouped into five categories (i.e., Strengths, Weaknesses, Barriers, Recommendations, Survey Tool, see Table 6).

STRENGTHS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AT UD

Students often reported on the strengths of UD’s community engagement efforts, such as community engagement happening on campus and throughout the state:

“...It seems that UD is very involved in the community. I had the opportunity to participate in the Blue Hen Day of Service which was an awesome opportunity to work in the community. Overall, I would say that these opportunities are available, and I plan on participating in more in the future.”

“I know that UD is broadly involved in education, health, and the arts in the surrounding community.”

“I think UD is doing a great job with community engagement.”

In addition, respondents provided examples of successful community engagement initiatives:

“UD's support of Osher Lifelong Learning Institute is an exemplar of community engagement.”

“I am aware of community engagement and outreach efforts through my department. Specifically, volunteering on DBI [Delaware Biotechnology Institute] campus to showcase science to high school students from Delaware.”

“The University of Delaware Emergency Care Unit engages with the UD community and the Newark community each and every day... I have been a part of this organization during my entire time here at UD and it has been very rewarding in providing a service to the campus and surrounding community.”

STUDENTS WANT TO BECOME INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Respondents were enthusiastic and stated they wanted to become involved with current and future initiatives:

“I would like to know more about how to participate in faculty research or community initiatives.”

“Never heard of most of this stuff before. Interested in participating [in Community Engagement] but unaware of resources or where to begin. No idea that other people were even trying to do things like this.”

“I would like to know more about UD's community engagement efforts and the best ways to get involved.”

WEAKNESSES OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AT UD

UD SHOULD MAKE A STRONGER COMMITMENT TO WORK MORE CLOSELY AND WITH GROUPS OUTSIDE OF NEWARK.

A few students wrote that there are areas that could benefit from additional community engagement opportunities:

“While I do think that UD works within the community, they are not reaching groups outside of the city of Newark itself.”

“For the amount of money that this school has, I feel like they can do a ton more of outreach within the surrounding community.”

STUDENTS WANT MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE BREADTH OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Upperclassman and graduate students expressed concerns about being uninformed about existing community engagement opportunities:

“As a graduate student, I am almost completely unaware of any community events that engage students or faculty aside from the yearly events the department holds. I am unaware of the partners of the UD community.”

“I have gone to UD for 3 years and have not heard about any community outreach or how to get involved with these projects.”

BARRIERS TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AT UD

LIMITS ON STUDENTS PARTICIPATION; STUDENTS EXPRESSED A NEED TO ENSURE EQUALITY IN PARTICIPATION

A substantial number of students expressed that they felt that being a graduate student or living off campus inhibited their ability to participate in community engagement:

“I feel like community engagement opportunities are very well known and handed to undergrads but need to be more available to grad students.”

“As a Lewes student, I am given little warning of opportunities up North for engagement and have seen denial of assistance from main campus with respect to central and southern initiatives. Cohesion is lacking and desperately needed to give these communities what they need.”

“I am not as engaged or up to date on what UD does because I commute 2 hours to the university.”

In addition, many students felt that community engagement initiatives were not inclusive based on disability and race or being a transfer student.

“The information is difficult to find and when it is available there is zero indication on if the activity is accessible for those with mobility issues or other accessibility needs (i.e., hearing impaired, etc.) I would love to be more involved but have learned that UD is terrible about inclusivity when it comes to even considering creating accessible events.”

“I taught a course with a service-learning component EDUC205 [Education 205 - Human Development: Grades K-8] where students go into community centers to get experience with children. I feel as though we lack proper training to navigate thoughtful discussions with students on the racial / SES [Socioeconomic Status] circumstances they will be experiencing. Also, UD could support these programs with additional staff training so that we are exposing our students to high quality childcare and child/staff interactions.”

“The community needs to be more available in teaching new, incoming students (of all ages) how to get more involved. As a transfer, it has been very difficult to get engaged - even though I am craving to...”

LACK OF STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

Students also stated that a lack transportation limits their ability to partake in community engagement activities:

“It's incredibly difficult to get involved in off-campus service because of the lack of transportation.”

“It's difficult to get off campus and in the community when there is no way of getting there. You need to be a part of a large group and have a carpool to get to these events.”

NOT ENOUGH TIME TO PARTICIPATE

In addition, students mentioned that they do not have the time and/or do not learn about events in enough time to participate:

“Community engagement exists and is easy for students to be aware of, but some students may not have the time to fully commit.”

“I think UD is doing a great job with community engagement, I just don't have enough time to participate.”

“[The way] I find out about programs and activities is via email, but I've frequently found that these emails come about 2 days before the event, so I either cannot attend due to prior engagements, or I am not interested enough to attend.”

LACK OF ADVERTISEMENT OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Furthermore, students expressed that they rarely know about events:

“I think it's strong, but it needs more visibility. I know these [community engagement] opportunities exist, I just don't know where I can find them.”

“Actually, I am a new graduate student here. For most of my time, I do my own course work. I have not participated in any community engagement so far. Maybe because I did not receive the notification, or I did not understand the specific content.”

“I think there needs to be more awareness about the UD community and how it's helping other communities because I don't think it's necessarily accessible at this point. I haven't heard much about this topic on campus and I'm not sure how to get involved in community engagement classes, but it sounds like a really interesting opportunity.”

“I believe UD has improved with providing more community engagement activities and events, however, I believe UD could do more than just send us email of these events, instead provide more posters/flyers where these messages don't end up lost in our emails.”

On the contrary, a few respondents state that there is a lack of advertising for community engagement:

“As a Newark local, I don't see how the University of Delaware works with the community of Newark. If there are community programs, they aren't advertised well or have a significant enough impact for me to notice them.”

“Either these opportunities are not well advertised/talked about or people who are engaged with them didn't have a remarkable experience in which they wanted to share.”

RECOMMENDATIONS TO OVERCOME BARRIERS AND IMPROVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AT UD *EXPAND THE SCOPE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES*

Students provided recommendations about where there could be more community engagement opportunities at UD. For example, one student mentioned the Associates of the Arts program:

“I feel like the Associates of the Arts program needs an engagement, club, fraternity that does volunteer work.”

Another respondent discussed the Fraternity and Sorority Leadership and Learning (FSSL) office:

“My recommendation is to reach out to the FSSL office on campus and ask about their organizations' community involvement, and how the University can have a larger hand in helping them achieve their goals.”

Finally, a student identified recommendations for global experiences:

“I think UD needs to be more proactive in including a global aspect to its community engagement strategy. One example would be to assist foreign students in better navigating the community and its resources, as well as facilitate more intercultural and global initiatives with the community for the betterment of student experience. UD could also facilitate more global community service projects.”

IMPROVE ADVERTISING OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Many students recommended ways to improve communication and advertising related to community engagement at the university:

“The use of social media is a great way to improve community engagement!”

“If there was a group/center within the University which regularly sent emails or information about different things then I think that would be best.”

“...getting students involved in community engagement might be more likely to occur if there were more emails/posters/announcements/etc about events that students could participate in or might like to hear about.”

SURVEY TOOL SUGGESTIONS

THE DEFINITION OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IS BROAD AND WHAT IT INCLUDES AND DOESN'T CAN BE UNCLEAR.

Students recommended providing more specific information in the surveys to enhance their understanding of community engagement:

“I do not understand what ‘community engagement’ is defined as and do not know what this survey was asking me about.”

“The questions in this survey feel too non-specific and too general. It is hard to pinpoint exactly what is meant by each question or what would qualify as each of the aspects asked about. Including examples with each question/statement or listing actual events that can be selected from might be more effective.”

INCLUDE A NEUTRAL OPTION FOR SURVEY QUESTIONS

Another suggestion was to include a “neither agree nor disagree” option. One student said: “For future surveys, I would suggest the introduction of a ‘neither agree nor disagree’ option for the radio-button questions on the previous page. This would tend, based on my understanding of the answers I wanted to give, to decrease the impression of dichotomy within students' answers.”

CONCLUSIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

Data collected from students provides valuable insight as the University moves forward with continued community engagement efforts and looks to build upon the relationships these efforts create. This measurement of UD’s community engaged work by stakeholder perceptions has proved to be a unique and novel undertaking in community engaged scholarship across the country. The process has brought about valuable conversations about ongoing strategic approaches that the University is taking to expand and emphasize community engagement. Results have demonstrated the importance of elevating partnership work as a critical outreach entity in each of these areas. In response to survey feedback, seven major recommendations have been identified:

1. **Clarify and expand awareness of what community engagement is, why it is valued, and how it can look across colleges and departments, as well as student groups.**

Leveraging the expertise of leaders at UD’s CEI through an expansion of their efforts may help to expand institutional awareness and broader valuing of community engagement as

an integral piece of the University's role in the wider Delaware community. In addition to mainstream channels of engagement efforts, results call for inclusionary CE outreach that promotes visibility and capacity for CE in other avenues of student activity. In order to foster more intentional and lasting community engaged efforts within student groups, visibility of CE must be promoted both on and off campus. Student RSOs including but not limited to Greek life, UDAB, and other intermediary groups are already actively engaging students in CE work. Strategic coordination, however, could be utilized to incorporate CE into RSO president and treasurer training as an effort to more fundamentally establish CE within the working framework of RSOs. Furthermore, existing RSOs can leverage their platforms to expand CE through other on-campus groups like the English Language Institute (ELI). CE awareness should be incorporated into meetings like ELI coffee hours to address gaps in the student body's CE awareness and interaction with CE.

2. **Consider a community engagement regular feature in The Review and UDaily.** One of the primary challenges students identified to community engagement efforts revolved around the communication and dissemination of community engagement efforts. The Review, UD's student newspaper, and UDaily's broad-reaching coverage of these efforts can translate CE achievement for a wide-range of readers, including prospective students and their families to increase awareness and involvement. As a key part of the University's Office of Communications and Marketing, these sources should consider a regular feature on the University's community engagement.
3. **Identify one central web-based location where community engagement activities and opportunities across the University can be located.** Information should be easily accessible to students in a single location online, including information on how to become engaged and information on community engaged courses. Respondents recognized a need for community engagement information to be easily accessible in a single location. Most often, students were looking specifically for information on how to become engaged in existing efforts. Some of this information, including upcoming events, partnership activities, and areas of involvement has been available on UD's CEI website (<https://www.cei.udel.edu/>). These resources specifically designate information for students to assist in the successful implementation, assessment and dissemination of scholarly community engaged projects. Currently, the student body's awareness of these resources remains low. Leveraging the expertise of leaders at UD's CEI through an expansion of their efforts may help in reaching students with CE resources and information.
4. **Clarify how students can work in coordination with and support established partnerships. It is important to build upon UD's CEI aims to expand the University's**

role in cultivating active citizens through partnerships that impact civic needs. In addition to the need for a central hub for CE, these results demonstrate a need to improve advertisements of current and future initiatives. Since 2013, UD's widespread engagement in communities around Delaware has become a fundamental piece of the University's image to its partners. In the future, respondents recognized the need to increase awareness of the university's engagement efforts by partnering with communications and marketing departments.

5. **Re-visit terminology related to civic engagement, partnerships, and community engagement to ensure consistency in messaging across the University.** Respondents answers show that confusion remains among students regarding what community engagement is and how to qualify these efforts in practice. This calls for a return to clarification of the terminology disseminated across the University. The CEI should broadly spearhead this consistent messaging although wider communications and marketing efforts, possibly led by UDaily, are also needed to more broadly communicate the nature of community engagement at the University.
6. **Increase transportation and additional accessibility resources to facilitate students' ability to participate in community engagement activities.** A high rate of student respondents identified the lack of transportation as a hindrance to their ability to participate in community engagement. It is important that accessibility issues do not exclude students living off-campus or those studying at satellite campuses from participating in engaged efforts and activities. To make CE more accessible to off-campus and satellite students, the University should provide transportation and other informational resources to give these students the same engagement opportunities on-campus housed students are exposed to.
7. **Create professional development learning opportunities for students (i.e., materials at orientation), perhaps in coordination with RSO leaders, to advance students' understanding of community engagement at UD, such as what the partnerships are and how to become involved.** Wider dissemination of UD's CEI resources, through an expansion of their efforts and coordination with student leaders, may help in reaching students with CEI resources. Specifically, integrating student delegates into the Community Engagement Council would help to develop the capacity for the student body's involvement in CE. Accelerating and expanding CEI partnerships and scope would connect students to existing and future opportunities.

This data has yielded new and valuable information for new community engagement work at UD and as the University continues to expand community engagement work, this annual survey will monitor changing stakeholder perceptions of that work. In the future, this research could be expanded to individual and respective involvement in specific activities and events in order to further enhance our understanding beyond a more broad-based picture of community engagement. The challenges and successes identified within this and other stakeholder reports recognize the important role of this data collection as a commitment to the increased scope of community engaged work at UD, in starting more conversations around community engagement and using data analysis in broader ways.

REFERENCES

- Association of Public and Land-grant Universities. (2020, February 4). 2020 Carnegie community engagement classification recipients announced. <https://www.aplu.org/news-and-media/blog/2020-carnegie-community-engagement-classification-recipients-announced>
- Civic Engagement Benchmarking Task Force. (2005). Resource guide and recommendations for defining and benchmarking engagement. CIC Committee on Engagement in collaboration with National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges: Council on

Extension, Continuing Education, and Public Service Benchmarking Task Force. Pp. 2.
<http://www.cic.uiuc.edu/groups/CommitteeOnEngagement/index.shtml>

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Survey Questions	Response Options	Percent
Q26. Please select the category that best describes your student status at UD: (n = 761) ^a	Undergraduate Freshman	35.6%
	Undergraduate Sophomore	18.1%
	Undergraduate Junior	12.9%
	Undergraduate Senior or Super Senior	12.2%
	Graduate Doctoral Student	9.9%
	Graduate Masters Student	9.3%
	Other Student Type:	2.0%
Q27. Please select the college(s) that best describes your department affiliation within the University: (n = 759)	Alfred Lerner College of Business and Economics	14.1%
	College of Agriculture and Natural Resources	5.5%
	College of Arts and Sciences	31.2%
	College of Earth, Ocean, and Environment	5.4%
	College of Education and Human Development	9.2%
	College of Engineering	17.1%
	College of Health Sciences	11.3%
	Other – please describe	4.0%
Q28. What is your gender? (n = 761)	Female	62.9%

Male	34.2%
Non-Binary/Third Gender	0.8%
Prefer to self-describe	0.5%
Prefer not to say	1.6%

Note. ^aPercentages do not add up to 100 because students were asked to check all that apply.

Table 2

Rating of UD's Community Engagement Work

Q1. On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is poor and 10 is excellent, how would you rate UD's community engagement work? (n = 908)

Participant Response	Percent
1	1.4%
2	1.0%
3	1.8%
4	1.7%
5	10.3%
6	11.8%
7	25.7%
8	9.4%
9	9.3%
10	14.0%

Table 3

Attitude Toward UD's Work in the Community in the Past Year

Q2. In the past year, has your attitude toward UD's work in the community improved, declined, or stayed the same (n = 908)

Participant Response	Percent
Improved	38.0%
Stayed the Same	59.0%
Declined	3.0%

Table 4

Extent to Which Students Agree or Disagree with Statement about Community Engagement

Thinking about your experience over the past 12 months, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements: *Indicate how strongly you agree with the following statements on a 1-4 scale with 1 being "Strongly disagree", 2 "Disagree", 3 "Agree", 4 "Strongly agree".*

Survey Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	<i>n</i>
Q3. It is easy for me to complete necessary paperwork to become approved to participate in community-based research experiences with children. (i.e. Criminal background checks).	44.5%	12.0%	58.8%	24.7%	616
Q4. It is easy for me to become engaged in research at this University.	4.7%	14.7%	58.3%	22.2%	761
Q5. I am aware of the Partnership for Public Education at UD.	24.9%	40.7%	25.6%	8.7%	761
Q6. I am aware of the Partnership for Healthy Communities at UD.	21.8%	33.8%	33.1%	11.3%	843
Q7. I am aware of the Partnership for Arts and Culture at UD.	24.3%	36.9%	30.2%	8.5%	834
Q8. I understand how to find courses that are "community engaged".	14.9%	32.9%	39.3%	12.9%	847
Q9. I have worked with a community group or partner while at UD.	13.0%	29.5%	37.2%	20.3%	787
Q10. UD supports arts and cultural activities in the state.	2.5%	8.1%	62.1%	27.3%	828
Q11. I have a good sense of the work UD is doing in the community.	7.0%	27.9%	49.0%	16.1%	853
Q12. UD supports K-12 education in the state.	3.4%	10.3%	63.6%	22.7%	740
Q13. UD supports community-based public health in the state.	2.8%	11.4%	65.7%	20.1%	756
Q14. Equity matters to UD when it comes to its community work.	3.9%	9.8%	62.4%	23.9%	768

Q15. Professors at UD are community-minded.	49%	16.0%	60.8%	18.3%	823
Q16. Community minded students are supported by the faculty.	2.5%	9.3%	62.6%	25.6%	800
Q17. UD does not understand the critical or unmet needs of communities in Delaware.	12.2%	48.9%	27.7%	11.2%	730
Q18. It is difficult for me to participate in off-campus community engagement activities supported by the University.	6.6%	37.5%	41.9%	14.0%	767
Q19. It is difficult for me to get involved with the community work UD faculty are doing.	6.7%	38.2%	41.0%	13.7%	759

Table 5

Extent of Engagement with UD in the Past Year

Please answer the following questions about the extent of your engagement with UD in the past year.

Survey Questions	Mean	Mode	Standard Deviation	Min/Max	<i>n</i>
Q20. In the past 12 months, how many courses have you taken that included community outreach or engagement activities?	0.91	0	1.782	0/15	765
Q21. How many articles or reports have you published in the past 12 months which you would classify broadly as “community-engaged scholarship”? Please exclude any unpublished class papers.	0.36	0	1.728	0/29	765
Q22. In the past 12 months, how many presentations have you given regarding community engaged scholarship?	0.40	0	1.598	0/30	765
Q23. In the past 12 months, how many presentations have you attended regarding community engaged scholarship?	0.77	0	1.960	0/30	765

Table 6

Qualitative Survey Data Categories and Themes

Category	Theme
Strengths of Community Engagement at UD	UD Actively Engages with the Surrounding Community
	Students Want to Become Involved in Community Engagement Opportunities
Weaknesses of Community Engagement at UD	UD Needs to Expand Community Engagement Outreach
	Students are Unaware of Community Engagement Opportunities
Barriers to Community Engagement at UD	Limits on Student Participation
	Lack of Student Transportation
	Not Enough Time to Participate
	Lack of Advertisement of Community Engagement Opportunities
Recommendations to Overcome Barriers and Improve Community Engagement at UD	Expand the Scope of Community Engagement Opportunities
	Improve Advertising of Community Engagement
Survey Tool Suggestions	Include Information about and the Definition of Community Engagement
	Include a Neutral Option for Survey Questions

APPENDIX

Student Survey

As part of its commitment to civic engagement, the University of Delaware (UD) would like your feedback about its community work. Results of this survey will be incorporated into future progress reports about UD civic and community engagement and used to guide planning efforts. The survey will take less than 5 minutes to complete and has just 3 easy-click through pages. Thank you for sharing your thoughts and perspectives with us.

I am over 18

- Yes
- No (Thank and discontinue)

Q1. On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is poor and 10 is excellent, how would you rate UD's community engagement work?

Q2. In the past year, have the number of opportunities for students to become community engaged increased, decreased, or stayed the same?

- Declined
- Stayed the same
- Improved

Thinking about your experience over the past 12 months, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements: *Indicate how strongly you agree with the following statements on a 1-4 scale with 1 being "Strongly disagree", 2 "Disagree", 3 "Agree", 4 "Strongly agree".*

Q3. It is easy for me to complete necessary paperwork to become approved to participate in community-based research experiences with children (e.g., criminal background checks).

Q4. It is easy for me to become engaged in research at this University.

Q5. I am aware of the Partnership for Public Education at UD.

Q6. I am aware of the Partnership for Healthy Communities at UD.

Q7. I am aware of the Partnership for Arts and Culture at UD.

Q8. I understand how to find courses that are "community engaged".

Q9. I have worked with a community group or partner while at UD.

Thinking about your experience over the past 12 months, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding general community engagement and perceptions? *Indicate how strongly you agree with the following statements on a 1-4 scale with 1 being "Strongly disagree", 2 "Disagree", 3 "Agree", 4 "Strongly agree".*

Q10. UD supports arts and cultural activities in the state.

Q11. I have a good sense of the work UD is doing in the community.

Q12. UD supports K-12 education in the state.

Q13. UD supports community-based public health in the state.

Q14. Equity matters to UD when it comes to its community work.

Q15. Professors at UD are community-minded.

Q16. Community minded students are supported by the faculty.

Q17. UD does not understand the critical or unmet needs of communities in Delaware.

Q18. It is difficult for me to participate in off-campus community engagement activities supported by the University.

Q19. It is difficult for me to get involved with the community work UD faculty are doing.

Please answer the following questions about the extent of your engagement with UD in the past year.

Q20. In the past 12 months, how many courses have you taken that included community outreach or engagement activities?

Q21. How many articles or reports have you published in the past 12 months which you would classify broadly as “community-engaged scholarship”? Please exclude any unpublished class papers.

Q22. In the past 12 months how many presentations have you given regarding community engaged scholarship?

Q23. In the past 12 months how many presentations have you attended regarding community engaged scholarship?

Q24. In the past 12 months, have you participated in a community-engagement activity through UD which was located off campus and intended to benefit the community?

- Yes, study abroad which included community service.
- Yes, community-based research project.
- Yes, volunteer work or community service.
- Yes, other:
- No.

Q25. Please provide any additional thoughts, advice, or feedback you have about UD’s community engagement here.

Please answer the following questions about yourself. These questions will conclude the survey.

Q26. Please select the category that best describes your student status at UD:

- Undergraduate Freshman
- Undergraduate Sophomore
- Undergraduate Junior
- Undergraduate Senior or Super Senior
- Graduate Masters Student
- Graduate Doctoral Student
- Other Student Type: _____

Q27. Please select the college(s) that best describes your department affiliation within the University:

- College of Agriculture and Natural Resources
- College of Arts and Sciences
- Alfred Lerner College of Business and Economics
- College of Earth, Ocean, and Environment
- College of Education and Human Development
- College of Engineering
- College of Health Sciences
- Other – please describe: _____

Q28. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Non-Binary/Third Gender
- Prefer to self-describe: _____
- Prefer not to say