Community Engaged Scholarship, Teaching, & Service in the St. Louis Region

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Definition
Community engagement refers to the types of activities whereby Brown School faculty, staff and students work with stakeholders outside of Washington University. These activities describe the types of engagement pursued to enrich individuals, families, groups, communities, and region through research, teaching, and service. All of our activities are rooted in a commitment to build or enrich mutually beneficial relationships that advance our academic mission and produce significant benefits to the region.

Background
Since the Brown School was founded in 1925, community engaged scholarship, teaching, and service has always been a cornerstone of the institution. However, over time both Washington University in St. Louis and the Brown School have struggled with the quality, quantity, and measurable impact of community engagement. As described in Washington University’s 2007 Steering Committee for Urban and Community Programs Report and Impact 2020: A Blueprint for Brown, it was recognized that the following was lacking: 1) internal coordination and communication, 2) tracking of faculty engagement activities and initiatives occurring through individual faculty and research centers, and 3) directing of resources for the benefit of individuals, organizations, and communities.

In Impact 2020, urban and community engagement was identified as one of the six critical initiatives the ten-year plan would focus on. According to the plan, “A significant strategic goal for the School’s educational, research, and service programs is to strengthen our substantial position in St. Louis and build upon our capacity to work with urban communities. We will do this by aligning our academic programs to produce increased benefit to St. Louis and surrounding communities, social service organizations, and government.” It further states “Our presence in St. Louis provides an institutional challenge as well a set of extraordinary research, education, and service opportunities consistent with our mission. We seek to lead University initiatives that create greater community engagement in St. Louis.”

However, after the shooting of Michael Brown and subsequent events in Ferguson, MO, in August 2014, there was a realization that the Brown School did not have a strong presence in segments of the community, particularly those aligned with our historical mission. There was a call to action to re-evaluate the community engagement strategy. The vision of former Dean Edward Lawlor was to initiate a comprehensive effort to galvanize the varied community engagement efforts within the Brown School community. To that end, the Steering Committee for Community Based Partnerships (SCCBP) was created in January 2015, comprised of faculty, students, and staff whose work focus on community engaged research, equity, and social justice.

In summer 2015, SCCBP facilitated workshops at the Faculty Retreat. Several themes emerged from that retreat that focused on gaining optimal benefit from the School’s community engagement and partnerships. The following guiding principles served as the springboard for developing the infrastructure for the Brown School’s community engagement model:

- **We will pursue impactful change** — We will work for progressive, measurable and systemic long-term change that maximizes the impact of our work with low-income people and communities in the St. Louis Metropolitan area.
- **We will build ideal partnerships** — We will create and promote safe environments for designing and attempting new approaches (ideal partnerships meet the criteria for partnerships determined by the Steering Committee for Community-Based Partnerships).
- **We will inspire and support relevant, innovative projects** that enable us to be agents of community change, whose strategic actions are informed by data and evidence and centered on addressing systemic issues and structural inequalities with the intent of creating healthy communities.
Assumptions
This work is premised on the following assumptions:
1. Community wants to engage with Washington University
2. WU faculty has a genuine interest in community engagement
3. University has an interest in transformative change in the St. Louis region that advances equity
4. Community asserts that WU has failed to invest in communities North of Delmar
5. Role of the academy is changing and moving beyond ivory towers to impact community. We must examine whether or not we can provide the resources needed e.g., time, capital, expertise and knowledge to respond to community perception that there are unlimited resources that could be aligned with community priorities
6. Must have real time good data regarding community engagement and understanding of its impact
7. Not every faculty knows best practices and principles regarding conduct community engagement
8. Work must have transformative and sustainable impact
9. Brown School community engagement activities are in alignment with the residents' desired social and economic development in our priority areas
10. The Brown School can afford the investment in multiple administrative partnerships in our priority areas.

In fall 2017, the charge to the SCCBP was reconfirmed by Dean Mary M. McKay to lead University initiatives that create impactful engagement in the region through:
• Continued long-term Investment/Outcomes with our partners for five to ten plus years
• Continued to advance a model of a sustainable administrative partnership that will work collaboratively to address regional issues, through development of a strategic plan to address and improve racism, structural inequalities, identified community issues and public health disparities.

To that end, the SCCBP took on a variety of internal issues (e.g., technological capacity to track community engagement activities, establishing operational policies, processes, and principles) as well as identifying what constituted community partnerships. They identified critical issues that stakeholders must understand.

SCCBP has focused its efforts on
• Building an infrastructure that will ultimately define policy, procedures, processes, tools, and systems that facilitate effective governance, accountability, monitoring, and sustainability of Brown School administrative partnerships.
  ○ Acknowledging and addressing the gaps in the existing infrastructure as necessary in order to eliminate barriers that, despite our well-established commitment to the School’s mission, do not always support the development, maintenance, and sustainability of vital community partnerships that are critical to achieving impact in North County, North City, South City and East St. Louis.

Our Role as an Anchor Institution
As an anchor institution, our vision of community engaged teaching, scholarship, and service is supported by an “Organization to Communities” model. The critical components of this model are: 1) mutually beneficial collaborations with community expertise and university expertise, 2) focus on community capacity building, 3) Brown School faculty, staff, and students who commit their time and knowledge, and expertise to capacity building, outreach, research, teaching, and service that is reliably assessed, evaluated, and valued by and with partner organizations and within the School, and 3) long-term, thriving partnerships with well-established community-based organizations with a solid track
record of positive impact within the School’s priority areas supported by effective use of resources from Washington University.

How the Community Interprets our Engagement

Building on the Washington University 2007 Steering Committee for Urban and Community Programs Report, the Brown School’s community engagement has been initiated by individual faculty, research centers, and departments often with the same organizations. Our community-based organizations view us as ONE entity (Washington University) not several entities at Washington University (Brown School, Med School, Law School, Sam Fox, and Provost Office). These varied and multiple interactions with community organizations has caused confusion and consternation because we all go about our work in different ways. The Community Assumes the Brown School Community:

- Collaborates with a common agenda
- Knows who from our Brown School community is working with them
- Knows what faculty, staff, and students are doing in the community
- Has limitless resources that support every community engagement activity

However, these assumptions are not always true. Over the past five years, the Office for Community Partnerships (led by Assistant Dean for Community Partnerships) and the SCCBP have worked to address these community assumptions and on establishing processes to better coordinate and strategically align ourselves with community organizations. The SCCBP discussed how to represent the progression of activities and/or relationships that exist between the Brown School and community-based organizations. Through Defining/Refining Levels of Engagement, we want to be intentional about defining what constitutes a “partnership.” We recognize that not all engagement with the community should be classified as such. However, it is still important to capture work at all levels to understand the holistic impact that the Brown School has within the community. The progression of levels of engagement and partnership are as follows:

Levels of Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Information/Space</td>
<td>Brown School provides research resources, network links, or assistance with meeting or program space.</td>
<td>Retrieving &amp; sending requested published papers, conducting guest lectures, links to people or other resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>Working together informally to achieve common goals</td>
<td>Early stage research, planning meetings, providing students for short-term course work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Short-term or ongoing formal work</td>
<td>Field Placement agreements, Projects requiring IRB approval, inclusion in grant, field application</td>
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</tbody>
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Partnership Type

<table>
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<th>Partnership Type</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Partnership (Brown School)</td>
<td>Formal MOU in place, multiple projects, ongoing, and reciprocal benefits identified</td>
<td>Formal MOU in place (on behalf of Faculty)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Partnership (Brown School)</td>
<td>Formal MOU in place, multiple projects, ongoing, resource commitment, and reciprocal benefits identified</td>
<td>Formal MOU in place (on behalf of Brown School)</td>
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Our Engagement Progress: Student in Practica by Geographic Areas

One of the areas identified for change included student practicum. Students were encouraged to work in the four geographic target areas. The tables below show the progress that has been made since 2015.

| North City/North County: Delmar to the South – 170 to the West – Mississippi River to the East – Missouri River to the North |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 2015-2016 | 2016-2017 | 2017-2018 |
| Number of Sites with Students | 19 | 31 | 32 |
| Number of Students | 38 | 64 | 73 |

| East St. Louis, IL |
|---|---|---|
| | 2015-2016 | 2017-2017 | 2017-2018 |
| Numbers of Sites with Students | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Number of Students | 11 | 10 | 8 |

| South City: 44 to the North – City Limit on south, east, and west |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 2015-2016 | 2016-2017 | 2017-2018 |
| Number of Sites with Students | 11 | 14 | 15 |
| Number of Students | 26 | 41 | 39 |

Our faculty project-based activities are ongoing in the School’s priority areas which are continually changing by semester.

This concept paper is to address the strategic theme of Community Engaged Scholarship, Teaching, & Service in the St. Louis Region. However, as work on this paper has progressed it is clear that this strategic theme also encompasses the need for expertise and engagement in community development and revitalization financing, workforce development and technological advances, and community science to advance population level changes.

**External Environment**

Our presence in St. Louis provides an institutional challenge as well as a set of extraordinary research, education, and service opportunities consistent with our mission. We seek to lead University initiatives that create greater community engagement in St. Louis. This plan reflects our desire to build place-based initiatives in communities, establish evidence-based agency partnerships, and contribute to key policy agendas in aging, community development, mental health, child welfare, community health, schools, and youth development.

A new research and training agenda for social work, public health, and social policy needs to be created by refining our transdisciplinary approach will maintaining excellence in our social work programs. The impact could result, for instance, in the transformation of income support policies from traditional programs of welfare and public support to a new regime that emphasizes work, ownership, and economic opportunity. Our faculty’s work on capacity building, asset development, civic engagement, and addressing life disparities is highly responsive to this new agenda of addressing poverty and social progress. A number of initiatives, such as HomeGrown STL, Equity Works, and the Center for Social Development respond to such national and regional challenges of disparities in economic opportunity.

Across the country, colleges and universities have embraced community engagement in a number of different ways. The Kellogg Commission defines engagement scholarship as:
“An engaged institution is responsive to the needs of today’s students and tomorrow’s. It enriches the student experience by bringing research into the curriculum and offering practical experience in the world they will enter. It forms partnerships of faculty, students and communities to put knowledge and skills to work on today’s most critical problems.”

(Returning to Our Roots: The Engaged Institution, Kellogg Commission Report, 1999)

In 2005, the Carnegie Engagement Classification was started as a pilot to develop a leading framework for community engagement. Carnegie defines Community Engagement as “the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.” The Carnegie Foundation’s Classification for Community Engagement is “an elective classification that involves data collection and documentation of important aspects of institutional mission, identity and commitments and requires substantial effort invested by participating institutions.” It is an evidence-based documentation of institutional practice to be used in a process of self-assessment and quality improvement.

As community-engaged scholarship, teaching & service have expanded across the nation a best-practices for responsible community engagement principles was created by The Center for Civic Engagement & Learning (CCEL) at Case Western Reserve University. The purpose was to guide and articulate an approach to engaging students in the community and to provide a framework for advising individuals, organizations, and departments interested in getting involved in the community. This list is not in priority order, as all best practices are interconnected and equally valued. These best practices should be considered when charting a future course for the community engagement:

- Embrace an Asset-based Perspective
- Foster Reciprocal Partnerships
- Value Diversity and Social Justice
- Practice Humility
- Engage in Education and Reflection

Economic globalization as well as political shifts have put increased demand on international social and economic development. Internationally, there is a better understanding and stronger emphasis on the social infrastructure that supports individuals, families, communities, and countries. The effects of civil conflict, war, and disaster and the resulting trauma to children, youth, and families are also emerging as a global priority. We will place greater emphasis on international social and economic development – in research, master’s and doctoral education, and international partnerships – to address this global set of challenges and opportunities.

**Strategic Themes**

For Brown School stakeholders it is important to define the purpose and goals of long and short-term community engagement objectives spanning administrative partnerships, community-based faculty research, teaching (includes field placements), and service (includes student and staff). Each of these elements are part of the School’s outreach and contributions to community development, and while sometimes they work in concert, they each serve very different purposes and require different types of infrastructure, coordination, policy and financial resources. As we begin to address these distinctions internally, it will become easier for community members to understand those relationships as well.

**Community Development**

As described in the figures below, SCCBP theory of change assumes that the Brown School through the fulfillment of its mission of research (1), teaching (2), and service (3-expertise and personal time provided) effectively deployed in partnership with community leadership for a sustained period of time in our identified priority areas can lead to transformational outcomes and population level impact. However, university-community engagement in our priority areas often lack sufficient capacity related
to planning, implementation (e.g., access to financial capital), which stifles social innovation and transformational impact. The social and unacceptable consequences of poor community development cannot be more operose and demanding of our rigorous principles of science and time.

External stakeholders also must have a good understanding about what the Brown School, as an academic unit of Washington University in St. Louis, can and cannot undertake. While we may passionately want to take on a community concern in a certain way, we may be limited in our capacity to respond. Universities cannot always act as individuals can, but we have significant resources available to affect change.

**Community Science**

There is a need to fully develop a Community Science strategy, which in addition to advancing rigorous science, call for an applied action that integrates building the capacity of community organizations and institutions through provision of:

- Evaluation services, technical assistance, information technology
o Educational opportunities that engage faculty, staff, students alongside leadership of partnering organizations, residents, and other stakeholders
  ▪ Research
  ▪ Teaching
  ▪ Service (practica, volunteering)

The Brown School as applied social researchers needs to do some soul searching. We have reached the limit with just problem identification and are attending to how to development, implement, disseminate solutions. Therefore, can we have a few prioritize community science questions at the school level that guides our strategic actions?

Options
The Brown School should continue to refine and develop strategic goals to advance our unique community science approach to university-community partnerships. We fully vested the Steering Committee on Community-based Partnerships and an Office of Community Partnership to lead the next phase of strategic goals related to community engagement. The following are priority recommendations for considerations:

• **Frame the Brown School Community Science** as unique approach that draws on our disciplinary and diverse research expertise and how it can culminate into a paradigm shift in how to operate as an applied research unit of Washington University in Saint Louis. We must also set thematic priorities for our applied research agenda that helps to build our national and international reputation that is aligned with our recruitment of faculty and students for our masters programs. For instance,
  o What refinements and new investments are needed to advance our Administrative Partnership model of deep investment in a priority area?
  o How can we strengthen our work focused on policy-partnerships?
  o How can our data science methodological capacity be aligned with our community science and community development priorities.

• **Faculty Development** is needed to prepare and incentive faculty involved in community engagement that is not only recognized but also highly rewarded in our merit review as well as promotion and tenure.
  o We identify best practices and develop faculty workshops on effective approaches to community engagement and on how to help community tap into our skills and expertise so they are in a position to execute what they might hope and dream about.
  o How do we incentive or dis-incentivize community engaged research, teaching, and service in how we structure merit review as well as promotion and tenure?
  o Develop curriculum and conduct workshops and training of faculty around context and community engagement in St. Louis.
  o Development of collateral material to support faculty engagement with community including script and visual maps of Brown School location, parking, directions, etc.. Idea is to create a unified consistent statement.

• **Brown School Certificates & Teaching Innovations** are needed to advance our efforts to better service our St. Louis target areas. For instance, the Brown School will offer a series of certificates alone or in partnership with University College at our Better Family Life suite. The Brown School Certificates (BSC) will be open to individuals currently working in the social service and behavioral
health sectors. The BSC will be offered as a part of our current course content. Community practitioners will attend select classes / sessions where the certificate material is being covered. For example:
  
  o Community practitioners interested in gaining a better understanding of diversifying funding sources in non-profits could attend these sessions in Practice II;
  o Practitioners who want to learn how to identify performance indicators and track progress of their program could attend sessions on tailoring evaluations in our Evaluation course.

The BSC would serve two purposes; first, it could provide our community partners with essential skills and demonstrate professional development and life-long learning; and second, it could become a major recruitment tool and jumpstart careers in for our MSW and MPH programs.

**Short- and Long-term Plans**

**Short Term**

The Administrative Partnership Track (APT), which was put in place in 2015 and is detailed more fully in the background section of this paper. The goals were to have at least three APT. Currently, Brown School has entered into Administrative Partnerships with Better Family Life and Family Forward. These Partnerships are working well, but there is room for strengthening and growth, which will be listed in later sections. In an effort to address our role as an anchor institution, we envision the Administrative Partnership Track can act as a roundtable, similar to the current Policy Forum structure, focused on convening groups of people and organizations and determining the various ways Brown School can act as the hub for inspiring and facilitating ideas and action in the community related to the original charge in 2014.

This track has four main focus areas for its work:

- Racism
- Structural inequalities and the role community capacity building
- Economic and public health disparities
- Issues identified by the partnering community

By formalizing the roundtable nature of the levels of engagement, we can have a more focused impact on and interaction with the community, while also establishing ourselves as the St. Louis convener for problems and issues (our convener role would not be to compete with the good work of the United Way, but to mimic it with responses which are grounded in academic thought, scholarship, and practice).

**Criteria for Existing Place-Based Administrative Partners:**

- Faculty Champion (or Senior Staff Person)
- Alignment within Brown School mission
- Geographic priorities: North County, North City, South City & East St Louis
- Opportunities for research, teaching, and service
- Opportunities for student involvement
- Financial commitment
- Existing level of engagement

In complement to the Administrative Partnership Track approach, we could also engage as a roundtable hub for the above focus areas, allowing the Brown School to engage with the community in multiple ways, which reflect current scholarship and research efforts. For example, suppose there is an anti-LGBTQ incident in St. Louis. Brown School can respond as such:

- We can cooperate with the community, planning response and support meetings, serving as the convener for the affected people and agencies.
• We can **collaborate** with the community, engaging in formal relationships, such as ongoing intergroup dialogue sessions around heterosexism/cisgenderism/privilege and oppression. We can also create field placements for students and agencies who want to focus on this work.

• We can enter into **faculty partnerships**, with formal MOUs in place, to conduct research that could identify and understand the root causes and potential solutions to the problem.

For the Administrative Partnership Track:

• Increase organizational capacity of administrative partners
• Increase and strengthen Brown School infrastructure
• Build template for Administrative Partnerships and criteria for cooperation and collaboration
  o Incorporate explicit focus on social justice
• Maintain and improve coordination and communication with administrative partners
• Build out to include varied activities for faculty development and student learning
• Formalize definitions of cooperation, collaboration and faculty partnership
• Formalize internal communication, processes and supports
• Determine the marketing and community push-out of our community science approach to community engagement
• Expand or customize Activity Insight into an administration, faculty and staff information community engagement repository, listing the backgrounds/skills each person possesses so that we better support community engagement activities at the Brown School.

**Long-Term Plans**

• Increase and strengthen infrastructure of local leadership and agencies
• Advance how we incentive community engaged research, teaching, and service in how we structure annual merit review as well as promotion and tenure
• Secure the financial resources to sustain current and new investments in Administrative Partnerships to continue our deep investment in our priority areas
• Strengthen our work focused on policy-partnerships
• Advance our data science methodological capacity and demonstrate its ability to be used to evaluate or advance our community science and community development priorities.
• Make practice & evaluation content more accessible to community practitioners via certificate programs offerings at BFL
• Expand database to track levels of engagement by faculty to use as a tool for planning, increase synergy, and reduce community tension and fatigue due to uncoordinated activities and engagement with the community
• Plan for major demographic shifts that are reshaping the region. Urban areas are at the leading edge of racial and ethnic change (across the US, with nonwhites now a clear majority of the population in urban counties while solid majorities in suburban and rural areas are white
• Identify all of our the School’s initiatives, where are they located, and how to effectively collaborate to advance equity in the region
• Advance a strategy for engaging more affluent communities as partners in our equity work.
**Significant Changes**

We suspect that members of the Brown School community are already engaging with the community in these various ways. This strategic plan seeks to formalize and capitalize on our individual work, building an effective culture of social innovation that values a collective approach to applied research. Therefore, instead of one person working with one agency, we may want to broaden our reach and effectiveness in that area by offering numerous ways that we can be involved. We see this as strengthening both our school and on as well as off-campus community.