University of Western Sydney
Institutional Review of Community Engagement 2005

Community Engagement Review Panel:
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Introduction
University of Western Sydney has articulated a distinct identity for itself as an engaged university. Having completed a strategic plan for community engagement, a logical next step was to take stock of current community engagement endeavors across UWS colleges and divisions. During July 2005, an online survey instrument was developed to collect reports on all community engagement programs. These were collated into briefing notebooks for members of the Community Engagement Review Panel. On August 31, 2005, all colleges and divisions of UWS met with the panel, each offering further comment on current engagement programs and their sense of barriers and facilitators to community engagement practices in the institution.

This report is based on the written reports and the review panel discussions. Each panel member submitted comments to the chair who then drafted this summative report and recommendations.

Taking inventory of community engagement programs can be an invaluable step toward advancing institutional commitment to engagement. Even before an institution articulates a commitment toward community engagement as a dimension of its intellectual and organizational agenda, some engagement activities will naturally be occurring; all universities have some level of community engagement in place even without it being explicitly encouraged. Taking stock of current programming provides an opportunity to develop a sense of the level of activity across the organization as well as identify issues, challenges and opportunities related to infrastructure; leadership; topic coverage; issues of policy, quality and practice; and areas for improvement and efficiency.

Having participated in national and international discussions of the growing importance of community engagement as an expression of contemporary research and teaching, UWS has embraced community engagement as a defining aspect of its mission beginning in 2002 when it organized Australia’s first national forum on community engagement. In 2004, UWS developed a community engagement strategic plan with the following four broad goals:

- Achieve national and international renown for leadership and scholarship in community engagement.
- Excel in the development and application of scholarship and knowledge in regional and community contexts.
• Make strategic use of resources and partnerships to provide leadership in community engagement and regional development.
• Promote civil society and sustainable communities by building their social and intellectual capital.

In the context of the strategic plan, the 2005 Review of Community Engagement focused on:

1. Extent to which the Board of Trustees-endorsed strategic plan for community engagement is relevant and is being consistently implemented.
2. Links between engagement and the University’s Research and Learning Programs.
3. Preparation for 2006 AUQA audit by demonstrating methods for tracking implementation of strategic directions for engagement and implementing a monitoring and improvement system.
4. Ways to link pockets of good practice across the university and make engagement more visible.
5. Establish systematic leadership and coordination of the area and more efficient and supportive processes.

This report attempts to summarize what the review process tells us about strategies for moving forward on these objectives and the strategic goals. The analysis also considers the status and condition of UWS in comparison to best practices and strategies of similar institutions. The report concludes with specific recommendations for improvement in the university’s capacity to support a robust and high quality community engagement agenda that will be seen as a leadership model. The model will facilitate the development of a strategic university-wide action agenda, while also recognizing and encouraging current and future innovative initiatives that reflect intellectual and community partner interests within colleges and divisions. This will require the development of a framework of leadership roles, dedicated infrastructure, and supportive services and policies that reinforce the embedded nature of engagement as a mode of research and teaching, and its relationship to complementary efforts in public service and outreach. The goals, resources, and expected benefits and outcomes for students, staff and partners must be explicit and intentional, as a reflection of broader goals for the university and its partners. Broad and deep institutional involvement in community engagement will be facilitated, documented, rewarded and recognized through a system of coordinating services, clear definitions and terms, a staff development agenda, systematic communications internally and externally, and implementation of measures of quality, impact supported by ongoing comprehensive data collection.

1. The Role of the Strategic Plan
The goals and sub-strategies provided in the Regional and Community Engagement Plan, 2004-2008 are a reasonable representation of the core components of an institutional engagement plan. There is considerable support for the plan across the institution. Many respondents expressed awareness of the need for UWS to move from being “reactive” to “responsive” (or intentional) in its partnership relationships and the impact of engagement on teaching and research priorities. However, the strategies attached to each
goal are so broad (e.g., “strengthening links between individual campuses and their immediate communities”) that, in many cases, they fail to provide a framework for action and decision-making at the unit or division level, strong connections to other teaching and research goals, or an obvious method to measure progress toward goal achievement. As a result, the current proposed performance measures listed in the plan do not align well with the strategic objectives. The review process revealed an impressive level of engagement, public service and outreach activity across all colleges and divisions, but also a lack of programmatic coherence, uneven quality, and little awareness of each other’s work. Analysis of assessment submissions revealed good work, but patterns of critical weaknesses in the best practices of engagement, especially in the areas of: partner input to project design; joint development of goals/outcomes for partners; methods for measuring impact/value to partner; clarity (or realization) of potential opportunities to enhance student learning through project involvement; integration into curricula or into lines of research.

Respondents were eager to contribute to this review process and support engagement as an institutional priority. They also tend to recognize the current weaknesses:

“We need to create longer relationships and engagement projects of greater substance.”
“Right now, engagement is more like a cottage industry than a coherent agenda.”
“There is lots going on, but what is the logic of the work in sum?”

Respondent recommendations and ideas, which are explored in this report, reflect this combination of enthusiasm for the future potential of engagement and a realistic view of current limitations that affect its scope, quality and sustainability.

Translating the Engagement Plan into more specific operational action plans that set priorities among the objectives and break those objectives into more detailed component parts would provide university staff with the guidance and support to enhance engagement quality, which would also lead to the identification of more relevant, simple and compelling measures of performance. Suggested directions and priorities for a more detailed approach are inherent in the recommendations offered throughout this report.

An obvious and immediate issue is the state of confusion about terminology, and leadership roles and responsibilities related to engagement.

2. Build Understanding of Terms and Forms of Scholarship: Linking Engagement to Teaching and Research

A fundamental and urgent priority must be to develop institutional language for engagement that promotes a consensus view among staff, students and community. Many activities reported in the review process typify outreach and public service more than engagement. Across respondents, there is considerable confusion about the distinctions between service, outreach and engagement, and a tendency to consider engagement as a new view of public service and therefore of minimal scholarly value. Thus, important connections between engagement and the enhancement of teaching and research quality are not clear even to some proponents of engagement programs at UWS.
What follows are proposed definitions of key categories related to the strategic plan for regional and community engagement. This level of attention to rhetorical detail is a crucial step for the institution based on the inputs and outcomes produced by the review process. Staff will not be equipped to implement aspects of the Engagement Plan without greater clarity of terms and forms of engaged scholarship as contrasted with more traditional forms of academic work. In particular, institutional consensus on terminology is fundamental to overcoming the impression that engagement is a “bolt-on” activity that is inadequately resourced and supported. As a mode of teaching and research, a considerable portion of community engagement activity can be covered by existing funding sources for instruction and research, once adequate capacity and skill is developed. Funding, in the form of internal incentives or new streams of revenue, is needed for staff development and curricular reforms, for supportive infrastructure, and some types of engagement partnership activities. Improvements in infrastructure support, resources and leadership for engagement are the highest priority need arising from this review, as will be discussed in this report, and the first obstacle the leadership must address is the current inconsistency in terminology and misconceptions of engagement as additive work. All other elements of the Engagement Plan’s implementation depend greatly on a deeper and more sophisticated institutional understanding of the role of engaged scholarship as a crucial method for achieving specific aspects of the core mission of teaching and research at UWS.

Community Engagement describes the intentional collaboration between higher education institutions 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. Community engagement is a mode of teaching and learning, and a method for research and scholarship. These activities are distinguishable from outreach and public service in that community engagement requires an intentional knowledge exchange relationship and explicit negotiation between internal and external partners on the nature of the exchange, expected individual and collective outcomes, roles and responsibilities, and benefits or products with the intent that both campus and community will be enhanced by the interaction and that active involvement of each is essential to the successful conduct of the partnership exchange. Community engagement program criteria include:

- Partnership grounded in special expertise/capacity of each collaborating organization
- Focus on complex, often evolving questions/issues
- Joint exploration of goals, expectations and limitations
- Creation of a mutually rewarding agenda
- Mutually-designed program that promotes shared leadership, decision-making, conflict resolution, resource management
- Clear benefits, roles and responsibilities for each partner
- Focus on knowledge exchange, shared learning and capacity-building
- Attention to communications patterns, cultivation of trust
- Commitment to continuous assessment of the partnership itself as well as outcomes
Outreach and public service represent a more one-way extension of academic information or direct services to external audiences through modes such as adult and continuing education; cultural events and services (lecture series, award programs, concerts, theatre, exhibits, museums, etc.); access to facilities; clinical services; fee-for-service consultation; professional development conferences and workshops; library services; and technology transfer, among other forms. In other words, the university has the expertise, resources, needs and the ideas to create programs and offer services to targeted populations or the general public; audiences attend or request or enroll for these services. There is the potential for public benefit but the activity primarily is based on academic resources, ideas and strategies. Public service also includes forms of “public scholarship” provided by academic staff in community settings (e.g., occasional speeches for lay audiences, media interviews, expert testimony, or board membership related to academic skills). Personal service (e.g. coaching under-8 soccer team, volunteering for a service club activity, performing a charitable act, etc.) is a form of private volunteerism and while admirable is not an indicator of the university’s intellectual contribution to community capacity. Although there are exceptions, outreach and public service are more likely to be episodic, reactive, based on a distant or passive relationship with the audience, organized primarily for the benefit of the university (and more incidentally for external audiences). These activities and services are enormously important to town-gown relationships and represent a cornerstone of the community’s general impression of the quality and worth of the university, especially in communities in close proximity to campuses. They tend, however to fall in the realm of service rather than forms of teaching and research. (Again, there are exceptions, such as clinical services which can serve the interests of teaching and/or research; these are typically delivered by the university acting alone. If a community partner organization were involved in the planning, delivery, and/or evaluation of the impacts of such teaching and research services, then the activity would become an engagement program.)

Community Engagement as teaching can be called Curricular Engagement which involves students, staff and community in interactions that address community-identified needs while deepening student learning of course content and learning objectives. There is limited curricular engagement today at UWS but also evidence of great interest in developing more engaged learning opportunities. Engaged learning (sometimes called community-based learning or academic service-learning) is distinguished from other forms of experiential learning by the intent of creating direct benefit for community partner and by the involvement of the community partner in the design of learning activities and the teaching of the student. Internships, practica, and cooperative education are all work-based experiences meant primarily to enhance students’ career exploration and their development of professional skills related to a particular discipline. In these experiences, students are usually working under the supervision of a practicing professional and while the student may develop a project or product, the primary goal is their own professional development and enhancement of career-related skills. Engaged learning strikes a balance between learning benefit for the student and direct benefit to the community partner and recognizes the unique knowledge assets of the community partner or setting. In general, engaged learning emphasizes joint planning between the staff and community partner to identify activities that meet a specific community need or
opportunity while providing a specific learning opportunity for the student. In sum, internships, practica, cooperative education, and community-based or academic service-learning comprise a portfolio of experiential education formats that need to be intentionally distributed across curricula to create a coherent in-class and out-of-class learning environment for students.

Curricular engagement typically is implemented in courses where one or more learning goals call for an experiential approach and access to community expertise or community venues to meet those learning goals. Learning goals most often relate directly to course content, but they may also include learning goals related to the social and civic development of the student. These learning goals are associated with the ambition of an institution to link education to the skills of participation in a diverse, knowledge-driven democratic society. Given the graduate attributes that have been articulated for UWS students, a process which articulates specific learning outcomes for all UWS students could create a framework for deciding to what degree should experiential learning (in any or all forms) be a hallmark of the UWS learning experience.

Engagement as research and knowledge generation is known as the Scholarship of Community Engagement; a specific conception of academic work that connects the intellectual assets of the institution (i.e., academic expertise) to public issues and questions such as community, social, cultural, human, business/industry, and economic development. Engaged staff use their knowledge and academic expertise to create exchange relationships with external, community-based sources of expertise and knowledge. In this mode of scholarship, the staff member is not extending, applying or selling knowledge and expertise to a community-based client, but rather engaging in collaborative work or joint exploration with a community-based partner who helps define the questions, shape the study, gather the data, and analyze findings. Here the community is collaborative partner in scholarly work, not a laboratory or mere data source. Engaged scholarly work relies on intellectual collaborations with external partners to explore questions of importance to community and academia, and to generate knowledge across diverse sources of expertise and wisdom. Engaged scholarship can lead to traditional products that inform and advance academic knowledge while also generating knowledge and resources that advance public understanding and community capacity to address problems or capitalize on opportunities. Engaged scholarship takes many forms, including the formal research methods of community-based participatory research and participatory action research.

Curricular engagement and engaged scholarship can be united thought the introduction of community-identified questions into programs of undergraduate research. Respondents suggested that students could be the vital link between academic research and public applications by translating research knowledge into products for lay audiences. At an even more sophisticated level, innovative models are being launched at research universities to engage undergraduates as researchers across the disciplines. More recently, community questions and partners are being connected to undergraduate research, thus guiding students in the exploration of the impact of knowledge on both their discipline and the public. (For an ideal model, see Duke University Research
Service-Learning Program.) As a first step, an interdisciplinary team with student and community members could develop proposed concepts to operationalize the Engagement Plan Strategic Goal 4 by conducting a literature review and regional research to define elements of “social capital” and effective models for enhancing capital. This would provide a framework or menu of action choices for each discipline across the university to integrate elements of social capital learning and development in curricula and engagement projects.

Engaged Partnerships are not monolithic, and the advancement of the UWS engagement vision will be accelerated by the development of a taxonomy of partnership relationships and a program of partnership principles. Assessment submissions and review discussants demonstrated some confused views about the meaning of partnership and the role of partners in community-based research and teaching activities. Engaged partnership frameworks abound in the existing literature and can serve as vital resource material for important campus and community discussions about partnership models and practices. As an illustration of the importance of intentional consideration of partnership designs, consider the following taxonomy of partnership types developed by Sockett (1998) which reveal that the varying tasks and purposes of partnerships call for different roles and levels of interaction.

- Service relationship – fixed time, fixed task
- Exchange relationship – exchange info, get access for mutual benefit, specific project
- Cooperative relationship – joint planning and shared responsibilities, long-term, multiple projects
- System and Transformative relationship – shared decision-making/operations/evaluation intended to transform each organization

With a clear understanding of terms and the different modes and models of engaged scholarly work and partnerships, the university’s leaders, staff, students and community will have the skills and confidence to begin to explore explicit connections to particular elements of research and teaching in order to fulfill the vision inherent in the Engagement Plan. Key to developing this culture of practice is the immediate need to solidify leadership and supportive infrastructure for engagement across the institution to facilitate the development of a common language and a more detailed approach to implementing the Engagement Plan.

3. Leadership, Visibility and Coordination

Successful and sustainable engagement initiatives require internal investment in institutional infrastructure and leadership at both the senior and “local” (school, college, discipline) levels. Engaged teaching and research are time and labor-intensive modes of scholarly work because of the intricacies of partnership relationships. They are also a critical factor influencing the public perception and support for the university, so the quality of the relationship is an important obligation of the university and warrants direct investment in support for quality programming. As in all modes of teaching and research, engagement entails a set of best practices and methodologies that require attention to program quality, project design, partner communications, logistical management, and
staff development. The current confusion over the terminology of engagement is exacerbated by a lack of coherent infrastructure or clear leadership responsibilities.

A Pro Vice Chancellor University Engagement (PVC(UE)) position was created recently, but only as a part-time appointment blended with other responsibilities. In the absence of a specific unit with sufficient resources and staff, both community partners and university staff cite the absence of clear pathways for building engagement programs or gaining supportive assistance for partnership activities as major obstacles. Of greatest concern in this regard is the lack of a responsibility center for attention to the quality of engagement programs, the development of the skills of engaged scholarship, the coordination of programs and relationships, and the measurement of quality, outcomes and impacts.

The review process reveals widespread support for coordinated leadership and supportive services for engagement programs. The creation of the PVC (UE) position was seen by respondents as an encouraging sign, especially in regard to creating an executive-level advocate for critical resource and policy questions, including the integration of engagement into reward structures and academic culture. The position needs to become full-time to support the ambitious and important agenda of the Engagement Plan. Respondents were clear that coordinated leadership and central infrastructure should be facilitative, not controlling; providing support and vision at both the university-wide level and for individual school, unit or discipline initiatives. The consistent message across written submissions and panel discussions focused unwaveringly on the desire for a flexible, responsive central resource for facilitation, coordination and support of the work, and clear opposition to any kind of bureaucratic superstructure that would be driven by regulation, procedural controls or a monolithic view of engagement purposes and models. This is consistent with best practices in the institutionalization of engagement in that effective infrastructure models are facilitative not directive. Successful engaged universities demonstrate a healthy level of institutional tolerance for innovation, flexibility and adaptability within a core context of fundamental commitment to coherence, quality and sustainability. After all, just as community engagement is enhancing diversity across different universities in regard to level of commitment and areas of emphasis, so will it serve as a force or internal diversity – framed by the Engagement Plan.

The ideal central unit led by the PVC Engagement would offer logistical support and staff development, facilitate the larger initiatives suggested in this report, provide a brokering function for community, create a method for data collection and reporting, promote policy reform and resource development, manage incentive and reward programs, and other core functions essential to sustainable institutional commitment to engagement. The scope and scale of this position and elements of its portfolio are described in detail in the recommendations section below. Suffice to say that infrastructure capacity in the form of a full-time PVC Engagement and sufficient supporting staff is critical to providing the intellectual and organizational leadership that will fulfill the Engagement Plan, create internal and external partnerships, and ensure quality, coherence, visibility, and intentionality in engaged work across the university.
Coordination. Leadership at the top is not sufficient in and of itself to fulfill the engagement mission of UWS. Successful engaged universities create energy and leadership both from the top down and from the bottom up. The locus of capacity and partnership networks – the capacity for delivering on the work and products of engagement - is at the school and college level. The review reveals support for a network of leadership focused at the college and school levels; individuals who would form a college committee for engagement to encourage engagement in the context of teaching and learning strengths and needs at those levels. Each college needs to designate a leader with at least part-time responsibility for engagement to work with school and college colleagues, and to collaborate with the PVC Engagement team to form the university-wide engagement leadership group. Together, this team will raise awareness of individual or unit activities, and identify patterns of support needs, good models, and opportunities for collaboration. Schools and colleges provide the intellectual energy and content of engagement; leadership and infrastructure provide the practical and essential support, training, facilitation, documentation, quality assurance, visibility and coordination.

In addition, there are other departmental units scattered across the university that have relevant capacity to contribute to the Engagement Plan’s fulfillment. Respondents conveyed a perception that there is a lack of coherence in the University approach to engagement, and that several units already plan small, possibly duplicated roles. Among those departments that described community interactions and connections as an aspect of their mission are Development, External Affairs, Whitlam Institute, Art Collection, Office of Regional Development (ORD), Corporate Relations, among others. Some of these recognize potential synergy with the idea of engagement infrastructure. A few of these maintain databases of community contacts that could be useful models for engagement data collection or could be linked to engagement data to leverage and compare information. There are too many databases existing or proposed, and further consideration needs to be given to merging, linking or reducing these diverse data sets. In particular it is critical to avoid asking partners, students and staff for duplicate data. Overall responses in the review suggested that coordination and merger of relevant units or resources made sense, so long as it did not become a procedure-bound bureaucracy. In particular, ORD was seen as having considerable potential to offer university-wide coordination, brokering and facilitation support since the unit has deep skills in those areas. ORD also has an excellent model for a simple, easy-to-maintain and useful community partner database.

The review process revealed minimal awareness of the potential for community engagement programs to enhance both the public image and the fundraising potential of UWS. In the United States, engagement has quickly become a key point of leverage to attract private donors and raise political and financial support for the university as a vital citizen of the region or state. The documentation and evaluation strategies the university must create to monitor quality and program improvement can serve as a resource for creating media stories, TV programs on community issues, and case statements for individual and corporate donors. The idea of development for higher education is just emerging in Australia, and engagement offers UWS a specific pathway for building
initial models and connections with potential supporters. Donors want to see their funds at work, and university-community partnerships that address critical public needs, improve communities and individuals, and enhance the power of learning and research are all attractive targets for new streams of funding. Already, Queensland University of Technology has garnered an endowment gift from an international foundation to start a Center on Philanthropy. Murdoch has funded several staff positions related to community priorities, using funding from local governments and businesses. There is vast potential for engagement to help UWS attract new resources.

Finally, community voice and input is integral to the successful implementation of the Engagement Plan and the sustainability of engagement partnerships. Many of the organizational strategies arising from this review present opportunities to include community participants in planning, reviewing, and evaluating engagement programs and structures. Some disciplines have external advisory groups to review curricula and research directions. Expanding that concept to additional disciplines where engagement will be especially relevant would have positive impact on university-campus relationships and open up new opportunities. The existing Regional Council should be reviewed in light of these new infrastructure investments and, in consultation with current members and other community leaders articulate a new compelling vision as a bridge between university and community and advisors in the development of engagement agendas and partnerships. The interests and ideas of the current Council are already captured in the recent survey conducted by ORD and is a resource for engaging Council members in a planning discussion. In addition, other roles for community input to UWS processes and programs are mentioned throughout this report.

Building institution-wide leadership and necessary supportive infrastructure is the highest priority recommendation in this report. This speaks to the implementation of the entirety of Strategic Goal 1 and the coordination and facilitation of many dimensions of the other three strategic goals.

**A Collaborative Model to Build Critical Mass Across the University.** While the review respondents expressed the importance of recognizing and honoring current engagement efforts through access to leadership and supportive infrastructure, there was considerable expression of interest in a university-wide interdisciplinary agenda for engagement. This review of community engagement brought forth thoughtful reflections and observations on the need to build a strong institutional “spirit” or “intellectual community” across colleges, units and divisions. Most respondents suggested that the university’s overall strategic capacity is limited in many ways by the geographic dispersion of campus sites, the difficult history of creating a university as an amalgam of separate institutions, and seemingly continuous organizational restructuring. There is a hunger for stability and a culture of collaboration across the organization.

While this is not a new or surprising revelation, the depth to which respondents felt engagement could be a lever for positive change was significant. The review reveals broad support for community engagement as a defining value and academic priority of the university, supported by a shared action agenda, facilitative leadership, necessary
policies and services, and clear connections to internal budget allocation processes. In a thinly-resourced, widely-dispersed university, engagement may seem like an overwhelming idea when considered by individuals or small groups. What is needed is a critical mass of staff capacity, supported by leadership and infrastructure, and energized by a focused engagement agenda that links academia to external partners in common cause.

If we accept that community engagement is most effective when it reflects the alignment between academic teaching and research strengths/goals and community needs and opportunities, then a participatory community-university analysis of that alignment could lead to the identification of a focused university-wide engagement action agenda. Such an agenda could identify several broad areas of focused engagement work that would create a catalyst for quickly building strong interdisciplinary and community networks around the key issues. Respondents said things like: “We should start by identifying the most productive areas for engagement.” “How will we mobilize the whole university? By a focus on key topics.”

A collaborative approach to engagement agenda-setting has many benefits, not the least of which is the potential to create a sense of shared intellectual community and common purpose across the entire university organization. Academic staff and community partners can easily discern their potential role and interest in such an agenda. The focus on particular topics of engagement work will tap into existing relationships and streams of funding while also attracting new participants. A focused engagement agenda also creates obvious performance indicators based on specific goals, actions, projects and programs. Taking a collaborative approach to implementing the strategic plan does not preclude individual action in other topic areas and partnership venues. The advantage of a collaborative approach would involve a larger proportion of campus and community in active exchange relationships and move UWS more quickly toward a critical mass of engagement capacity. The experience of other universities suggests that creating a large-scale agenda that involves many staff, students and partners creates a context that inspires innovative partnerships in more narrow, specific areas of interest.

**A Single College Approach to Building Capacity and Models.** At the same time, developing one college or school as a fully-realized exemplar would accelerate understanding of methods for intentionally and strategically integrating engagement into a specific portfolio of teaching and research interests. Looking at the elements of the recommendations arising from this review, many strategies could be (or may have to be) developed first on a smaller scale in one college or school with the idea of implementing similar strategies or proven approaches in other areas. For example, a college or school could model the process of embedding engagement into certain courses based on their exploration and articulation of specific learning goals and experiences for students.

**Strategic Use of Internal Investments and Incentives.** Whatever approach is taken to launching infrastructure and building critical mass of sustainable engagement efforts, internal investments and incentives must be distributed in ways that generate greater impact on organizational behavior and culture. Criteria for distinguishing engagement
from public service and outreach work must be developed based on the new views of the terms and criteria that define engaged teaching and research, as proposed herein. That important first step ensures that investments in organization change and engagement programs are focused on true forms of engagement, not public service or outreach.

In addition, review respondents felt strongly that prior efforts to create internal incentive funds were “too small, too short of duration and too bureaucratic” to have much effect on organization culture and practice. The majority of respondents called for a focus on awarding incentives at the school level, with some preferring the college level. This aligns with effective strategies for institutionalizing engagement by creating critical mass from the “bottom up” as a complement to a university-wide engagement agenda. Investments at the school or college level allow the staff of each program or discipline to define their role an engagement agenda that honors their own diverse talents and interests, builds on existing partnerships, and opens up the opportunity for innovative approaches to linking engagement to student learning and staff research.

Create Opportunities for Recognition and Reward. While many discussants during the review panel interviews spoke to the problems associated with integration of engagement into workload calculations, fewer than anticipated focused strongly on issues of engagement as a component of faculty review and reward processes. Certainly there are concerns on this front, especially in regard to the gap between staff practicing engaged scholarship and the staff who may sit in judgment for promotion and tenure decisions. As in other universities exploring engagement, the challenge of creating ways to value and assess engaged scholarship with existing reward cultures can seem daunting, and yet the successful remedy is quite straightforward. As a mode of teaching and a method of research, both grounded in institutional strategic goals and internal priorities, engaged scholarship can be recognized within the existing policy framework. The real obstacle is academic culture and faculty expertise, both of which can be addressed by a robust agenda of staff development around the concepts, criteria, standards and best practices of engaged scholarship. Not all staff will adopt engaged scholarly methods in their career, but all staff need sufficient understanding to recognize and respond to the value of the engaged scholarly work being produced by their colleagues. A number of excellent models for staff development and handbooks for documenting and evaluating engaged scholarly outputs already exist in prestigious universities in the United States and elsewhere. These are examples which can accelerate the integration of engagement as a valued element of scholarly practice at UWS.

Often academic staff place considerable value on other kinds of rewards and recognition beyond the formal personnel process. Engaged scholarship should have award and recognition opportunities similar to those that exist for other modes of teaching and research. Some internal incentive resources could be directed toward a prestigious annual award for an engaged scholar and for a community partner organization, and/or for the partnership relationship itself. Academic staff who are role models for engaged scholarship should be convened at least once per year and recognized for their intellectual contributions as well as community contributions. Engaged students also warrant recognition through either competitive application for an award or through their
completion of a set sequence of community-based or service-learning courses leading both to a community benefit and strong academic product. One widely used model is to designate such students as “community scholars” upon completion of their studies. As engaged teaching and learning grows in schools in Australia, it may become important to consider scholarship incentives to attract students with school records of service and engagement in communities. Other examples of recognition events are suggested in the Recommendations section below.

A highly successful model for providing recognition and reward is to provide support for an Engaged Scholars or Faculty Fellows in Community Engagement program, selected competitively on an annual basis. Described further below in the recommendations, a fellows program lends prestige to engaged scholarship, signals its centrality to the mission and strategic plan of the institution, builds capacity to produce research on engaged scholarship (an objective of the Engagement Plan), and builds a cadre of experienced engaged scholars who can serve as role models and mentors to others. In addition, a program for younger, emerging scholars signals the value of engaged scholarship to all academic staff and by involving the diverse continuum of staff experiences. Commitment to engagement as an aspect of scholarly work will be difficult if it is seen as “safe” only for senior staff. An additional benefit of these strategies is that they contribute to the development of a core of academic leadership across the institution to support and critique the broader institutional engagement agenda, promote quality practices, and contribute to strategic decisions regarding engagement and partnerships.

4. Strategies for Creating Monitoring and Improvement Systems

Monitoring Engagement Activities and Participants. The PVC (UE) must ensure timely and effective collection of useful and relevant data for internal and external monitoring of program quality, opportunities for improvement, and evidence of impacts and outcomes. In particular, online data about partnerships can be invaluable to growing and sustaining engagement activities and it will be the foundation for creating a vibrant, interactive Web portal for community engagement activities. Ideally, the Engagement Web portal will convey stories of partnerships, provide links to useful reports and resources, and present an overall vision of the UWS Engagement Plan and activities. Potential community partners or supporters of UWS could monitor engagement activities or search for campus experts to contact. A focus on specific topics of university-community interaction would promote internal and external collaboration across projects. Core university and community program data needs to be available online to facilitate brokering, planning and reporting between staff, students and partners. Searchable data about current and potential partnerships will facilitate coordination and awareness across the university and community, and also support research on engaged teaching and research, in keeping with the Strategic Plan.

To realize these exciting benefits from data collection and an effective website, the PVC (UE) must lead the development of simple, short, but useful online instruments to make it easy and attractive for staff, students and partners to submit information as needed. Current instruments used for the review submissions and partner surveys are unnecessarily complex and they do not reflect best practices in engagement. Routine data
collection instruments need to focus solely on core descriptors and action elements of community engagement activities (partners, purposes/goals, nature of activities, audience/community served, evidence of impacts on partner, students, staff, others, and examples of products/achievements/deliverables. To develop a comprehensive database of community organizations, partners and agencies, there must be a simple, quick instrument for community partners to provide basic information about their organization’s mission, partnership interests, needs and assets, and contact information. ORD has a promising model for such a data base. The occasional collection of data regarding staff or partner motivations, interests, perceptions, attitudes, levels of satisfaction or opinions should be accomplished through separate instrument, as needed.

The current focus of data collection certainly must prepare the institution for the 2006 AUQA audit, but should also lead to an efficient and straightforward method for ongoing monitoring, program improvement and data collection for internal and external purposes. In particular, a number of strategies recommended in this report will require routine access to real-time data regarding the topics, participants, impacts and outcomes of engagement activities (e.g. media stories, fundraising, awards programs, community reports, coordination of projects across units, etc.).

**Monitoring Quality, Outcomes and Impacts.** Monitoring impacts, outcomes and impacts requires different and separate, but complementary strategies to methods used for monitoring activities and participants. Data collected through the above-described activity reports are useful for reporting and describing elements of the level and range of engagement programs and participants. Attempts to combine activity reporting with outcome reporting tend to produce unwieldy databases and long, frustrating instruments that staff and partners resist using. It is far more efficient and accurate to separate the two inquiry functions.

The achievement of the Engagement Plan relies in great part on the collection of evidence that demonstrates impacts on students, staff and community. Based on findings of this review and the recommendations in this report, a suggested list of potential metrics for measuring inputs, outputs and outcomes of engagement are provided. Unique instruments will need to be developed to collect quantitative and qualitative documentation regarding impacts. The instruments arise from the set of metrics we wish to track, so next steps will be to refine this list of metrics, identify which ones fit in an activity report instrument, and then build a quality/outcome report that resides in a separate place on the Engagement Website. Some project products may be tangible and a method for collecting those will also need to be developed. Examples of effective data collection instruments relating to activities and to outcomes and quality will be provided as a follow-up to this report.

Incentives to encourage staff and partners to provide inputs to online data collection systems could include:
- Only submitted courses and projects can be presented in staff portfolios for promotion and tenure review
• Only staff and/or partners who have kept their data current can apply for new competitive funds
• Use engagement data to make funding allocations to units, divisions, schools or colleges for achievement and excellence
• Nominees for award and recognition programs will be selected based on submissions to data sets
• Content of an annual engagement report will be drawn from database submissions
• Submissions may be selected for featured attention on the Community Engagement Website

Measurement systems must attend to both qualitative and quantitative indicators because of the core nature of engagement as a form of scholarly work: it is driven by and depends entirely on human relationships and interactions. Therefore, any data collection system must recognize that there is value in monitoring and collecting products, impacts on community conditions, learning outcomes for students and academic products, not just activity inputs/outputs and financial costs/benefits. The ultimate indicator of the quality of engagement will be a sustained agenda of engaged teaching, research and partnerships across the university and community that produces measurable improvements in learning, scholarly productivity, and community quality of life.

Documentation and evidence can also arise from events and meetings related to community engagement programs and activities. Celebration and visibility are important internally and externally to providing the recognition that engagement programming deserves and to reward and motivate the outcomes and achievements of all participants. Events such as an “Engaged Research Day” or “Community Partnership Convocation” or “Student/Partner Engagement Reports” are a few of the many ways to create events that showcase engagement projects, products and participants as critical elements of the teaching and research agenda of UWS.

In addition, the goal of positioning UWS as a leading model of the engaged university also calls for the creation of a formal “annual report on community engagement” which will provide highlights of effective programs, a complete directory of participating staff and community partners, and a summary of the impacts on public issues.

Overall, the considerable attention given to measurement and documentation provides a data resource of great value far beyond responding to external performance reviews. Such data, and the qualitative stories developed through recognition events such as those just described, can be used to support an internal and external action plans, and for strategic efforts to tell engagement stories and outcomes to relevant leaders, donors and other stakeholders.

**Metrics of Engagement - Examples**

- Internal measures
  1. % or # of students involved in service-learning or community-based learning courses
  2. % or # of staff involved in teaching those courses
3. Entering and exiting survey of student knowledge, skills, and attributes associated with a UWS graduate
4. Comparative rates of retention (or time-to-degree) among students taking experiential learning courses v. those students that do not
5. % or # of entering students reporting UWS was their first choice university
6. % or # of staff involved in the university-wide high-priority topic areas for UWS engagement programs
7. # of courses and projects involving students and staff in community social capital building (Engagement Strategic Goal #4)
8. % or # of staff with externally-funded engaged partnership projects
9. Internal funding level for engagement infrastructure
10. # or % of staff that include elements of engaged research and teaching in promotion and tenure portfolios
11. Range of disciplines that develop, implement and track a unit-level strategic plan for engaged teaching and scholarship
12. % of new staff demonstrating prior engagement experience
13. # or % of faculty completing staff development events related to engagement practices (and/or demonstrating adoption of new techniques and strategies)

External “measures” or context
1. Public (local/regional/state government, community/business/industry leaders, schools, key community organizations, etc.) awareness of an intentional strategic agenda for UWS community engagement that identifies specific community issues/topics and the alignment with campus teaching and research strengths
2. Number of partners (local/regional/state/international) reporting satisfaction with partnership interactions with UWS, as measured by willingness to continue collaboration (repeat business); by joint efforts to raise financial support; by request for additional partnerships
3. Increase in number of partners seeking to collaborate with UWS
4. Level of involvement (documented attendance and participation) and satisfaction (my contributions had an impact on UWS) of members of the Regional Development Council, and of members of disciplinary advisory boards
5. Replication of successful partnership models into new settings/disciplines/communities
6. Employer survey respondents estimate of students’ demonstration of UWS graduate attributes
7. Measurable indicators of community impacts or outcomes for the specific based on the specific focus of the partnership and the role played by the university. (For example, if a program seeks to increase educational access and success for indigenous teens, we can only measure impact and outcomes for the youth actually involved in our partnership programs, and only in relationship to outcomes projected from the planned interaction or intervention. If a partnership leads to the commercialization or adoption of a method, technique, intervention or program model, those outcomes can be measured for its impact just as we measure commercialization of a patent - by looking at income generated, jobs created, lives improved, community conditions improved, reduction in crime,
increase in youth success in schools, etc. In other words, external impact measures are determined by the project and audience focus of the partnership.)

8. Sources and amounts of external funding for engagement programs and partnerships
9. # of positive media reports related to engaged partnerships and impacts
10. Increase in enrollment from target populations affected by partnership interactions
11. # of staff and/or staff/partner authored publications and presentations on or about engaged scholarship practices, impacts or outcomes
12. Community satisfaction with and application of specific products, findings, strategies, models, information produced through the engagement activity

Recommendations:

1. **Make Pro Vice Chancellor University Engagement a full time position.** The Strategic Plan presents major goals related to engagement and places community engagement as a central element in building the quality, funding and reputation of the institution. Such an ambitious agenda is eroded in the minds of academic staff if they do not perceive strong leadership commitment and support. Blending it with another administrative role reinforces the mistaken notion that engagement is “extra” and optional work, even for the person assigned to lead the agenda. Other universities in Australia have assigned full-time PVC or DVC positions to community engagement and to achieve its internal goals and aspire to national leadership, UWS must also make fulltime commitment. A fulltime appointment offers several specific advantages:

   - Academic leadership to focus organizational attention on the strategic plan goals and objectives
   - Peer interaction with other universities embracing engagement
   - A locus for monitoring the quality and internal/external impacts of engagement activities
   - Management of data collection and reporting systems for engagement
   - Facilitate implementation of the Engagement Plan, beginning with immediate action plans
   - Develop logistical support and coordination services for engaged staff, students and partnerships
   - Support and leadership for an ongoing agenda of academic staff development
   - Coordinated view of the distribution of engagement programs across the institution and the alignment of teaching and research strengths with evolving regional needs
   - Single point of interface for external community partners; the brokering function
   - Work with the Regional Council to create a vibrant and collaborative link between university and community for planning and assessment; building UWS capacity to be responsive and proactive
   - A line organizational structure to bring coherence and intentionality to engagement programming
• A leader charged with developing the highest level of expertise in the conduct of high quality engagement programs so as to serve as a role model and mentor to academic staff
• A peer-level appointment to liaise with those in charge of UWS curricular and research strategies.

2. Identify at least a part-time **leadership position in every college** to coordinate and support engagement endeavors at the college level, including the coordination of a college engagement committee. These appointments provide college-level leadership, mentoring, coordination and technical assistance regarding the integration of engagement into teaching and research priorities and goals. One possibility would be to integrate engagement into the AD Research or AD Teaching since engagement is an integrative form of scholarship. Or, the leader could be a leading engaged or recently-retired senior staff with engagement experience. These college leaders become the engagement leadership team along with key personnel supporting the PVC (UE) unit.

3. **Concentrate related departmental units** in the PVC (UE) portfolio. The Office of Regional Development seems obvious, and could provide the experience and expertise to develop university-wide partnership brokering, coordination and staff development functions for engagement programming. Other units could be considered for inclusion into the portfolio, or at least for building strong links, based on their current roles and capacity to support key elements of engagement. These might include Art Collection, Whitlam Institute, External Relations, among others. Consideration should also be given to coordinating or linking or merging databases that may overlap or provide the potential for enhancing data quality and utility.

4. The PVC (UE) must define the purposes and design of **effective databases** for engagement programs, including the creation and management of data collection instruments, issues of access to and use of data, and the schedule of regular updating. These should be coordinated with other similar databases across campus and consolidated or linked where practical and useful. As an example of potential cooperation on data collection, ORD has created an excellent model for a project database that could be used to build a larger set of data. Ideas for collecting products and results from engagement activities are provided in the main text above. A comprehensive and coordinated approach to qualitative and quantitative data collection will provide for continuous monitoring of engaged activities, progress toward the strategic plan and partner contact information as well as program quality, impacts and outcomes. This approach should serve both internal and external reporting, planning and assessment purposes.

5. PVC (UE) team should facilitate a university-wide **staff development agenda** that can include readings, workshops, study groups, mentoring partnerships, exchanges with engaged scholars from other institutions, etc. The first priority of the agenda should be **development of a UWS language for engagement**, beginning with a
review of terms and definitions proposed in this report. Other priorities for staff development include:

- Models and best practices for engaged teaching and research in specific disciplines
- Characteristics and practices of effective partnerships
- Learning goal development for academic service-learning
- Creating syllabi and partnerships for academic service-learning
- Methods for community needs analysis/asset mapping
- Methods of community-based and participatory action research
- Evaluation methods for community settings and partnerships

6. Develop the skills of academic staff regarding the **documentation and review of engaged scholarship as a mode of academic work** deserving consideration in the review and reward system. Even those who may not adopt engaged methods in their own scholarly work need to understand the basics of engaged scholarship in order to embed engagement within the institution’s scholarly portfolio and academic culture. Resistance to engaged scholarship as a relevant component of scholarly work more often arise from a lack of awareness of the practical techniques and the global extent of engagement than from any core objection to the concept itself.

7. The PVC (UE) team needs to create a compelling **UWS Community Engagement website** that features information and resources and calendars for both campus and community. Ideally, this website would intersect with the partner/project/staff database to support and facilitate evaluation, monitoring, and the brokering of new partnership relationships from either university or community perspectives. The website also should be a component of a comprehensive public communications plan that intentionally uses engaged partnerships as a vehicle for building public understanding of UWS’s role in GWS and beyond. (See University of California-Los Angeles or California State University-Monterey Bay websites as examples.)

8. Create a highly competitive and rigorous **internal grant or incentive program** that offers direct support for new or enhanced engagement projects and partnerships. Criteria for these awards must ensure attention to best practices of engagement, benefits for UWS and the community, role of the community partner(s), and the alignment of academic goals and strengths with external needs and opportunities. As described above, the review suggests that these investments should be directed primarily at the school/college level. In addition, a portion could be devoted to funding collaborative research on community needs to shape future engagement activities. The PVC (UE) would manage this process and involve university staff and community advisors in the selection. A proposed model will be developed as an addendum to this report.

9. Renew commitment to the **Regional Council**. Develop a specific charge that enhances the advisory and communications roles of the Council, in keeping with the recent survey of their interests and ideas. The process of renewing the Council charge requires participatory processes that involve Council members, PVC (UE), academic
staff, and other community voices. The Council has the potential to model university-community communications and interactions and as a sounding board for keeping the institution alert to changing community issues.

10. **Faculty Fellows in Community Engagement.** Consider using internal incentive funds or other resources to select a class of faculty fellows in Community Engagement through an annual competitive process. These Fellows develop or enhance engagement partnerships related to their fields of interest, separately or together. They also work as a learning community to develop various scholarly products from engagement programs, develop funding proposals, or mentor other faculty. Over the years, a cadre of experienced faculty quickly develops; again, a way to build critical mass. Also consider an **emerging scholar program** to encourage and create incentives and rewards for younger staff to integrate engaged work into their scholarly agenda. These ideas speak to Engagement Plan Strategic Goal 1.2 and 1.3.

11. **Embed Engagement across Curricula. Create an Experiential Learning Map for every Course of Study.** Each course of study (major) needs to articulate a specific curricular design that reflects the degree to which any or all forms of experiential learning are essential to student learning and develop a curricular map across courses to describe where experiential learning occurs and the relevant learning goals. This process could begin with one college or a subset within a college to develop models and should be a collaborative process led by relevant academic administrators in partnership with PVC (UE). Embed experiential learning opportunities in the course planning and approval (accreditation) system. This creates a natural and routine method for tracking experiential learning activities, outcomes, and partnerships.

Unit discussion questions might include: What learning goals for our discipline call for experiential learning and in what modes? How might community-based or academic service-learning enrich community partnership relationships relevant to our teaching and research objectives? What aspect of our curricular structure and content prepares graduates not just for a successful vocation, but also for effective involvement and leadership in civic and social endeavors?

12. **Create a Community Engagement Action Agenda for the University and Each College/Division/Disciplinary Unit.** As stated in Engagement Strategic Plan goal 1.4, the University must create capacity for identifying key issues of the communities that best fit the alignment of external knowledge needs and assets to UWS goals for teaching and research excellence. Whether in GWS, other parts of Australia, or off-shore, UWS must work collaboratively with external partners to assess community needs, assets and priorities.

The PVC (UE) could facilitate a broadly participatory process of creating a university-wide, along with unique and complementary college, school and division plans for engaged teaching and research activities. This process also produces the more detailed action plans and priorities needed to fulfill the vision inherent in the 2004-2009 Engagement Plan, and generate a clear structure for ongoing data collection and monitoring.
This approach allows for a balance between a comprehensive agenda and the special interests and ideas of specific units of the university. Several models for this are presented in the main text of the report. The ultimate goal, whatever the level of the institution, is that engagement and partnerships should be intentionally selected in keeping with the teaching and research strengths and goals of the unit, the interests and assets of the community, all organized according to best principles of community engagement. The Engagement Plan must provide for staff innovation and creativity in engagement as well as an overarching framework that sustains a broader, ongoing agenda of community-university interaction. Thus, the university develops greater involvement and capacity for engagement while honoring and enhancing existing work and partnerships.