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Spring | 13

UNC Community and Civic Engagement Plan: Institutionalizing Public Engagement Executive Summary

Prepared by the Community and Civic Engagement Committee
With Input from the Campus Community



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Executive Summary

Overview and Scope

The Community and Civic Engagement plan is informed by the work of the Community and Civic Engagement Committee and intentionally aligns with University of Northern Colorado's (UNC) institutional priorities and efforts. It has been largely informed by input from faculty, student affairs professionals, administrative staff and others. Now that this plan exists, the subsequent implementation must also focus on gathering student voices and community feedback, supporting and building increased community partnerships and generally engaging other constituents beyond UNC.

The proposed community and civic engagement plan, organizational resources/structures and outcomes set forth are grounded in a theory-logic model, posited here as “a set of interrelated assumptions, principles, and/or propositions to explain or guide social actions” (Chen, 1990, p. 40), and illustrated in figure 1. It is imperative to underscore that this document is a roadmap for an emergent institutional model for the organization and work that is to occur over the next three years. It is not a blueprint for an organizational structure nor is it intended to mandate the specific deliverables. Rather, it provides guidelines for how this work is to be coordinated and facilitated, how faculty, student affairs professionals, staff, students, community partners and others, might be engaged with a view to implementing a long-term formal and sustainable public engagement model at the end of three years. While the plan extends across potentially many areas, the emphasis resides in infusing engagement into our academic mission and activities with a view to enriching and improving engaged teaching, learning, scholarship, and creative works.

The What and Why of Public Engagement

This Community and Civic Engagement plan identifies specific strategies and action steps to strengthen, coordinate, and systematize Public Engagement across UNC over the next three years. The focus is to advance the infusion of engagement into teaching and learning; research, scholarship and creative works; and service activities, occurring on campus, online and in communities both locally and globally.

Public, or community, engagement is broadly defined as the “The collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in the context of partnership and reciprocity. It can involve partnerships and coalitions that help mobilize resources and influence systems and serve as catalysts for initiating and/or changing policies, programs, and practices.”¹

¹ Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. (2011). Classification description: Community engagement elective classification. Retrieved from http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/descriptions/community_engagement.php.

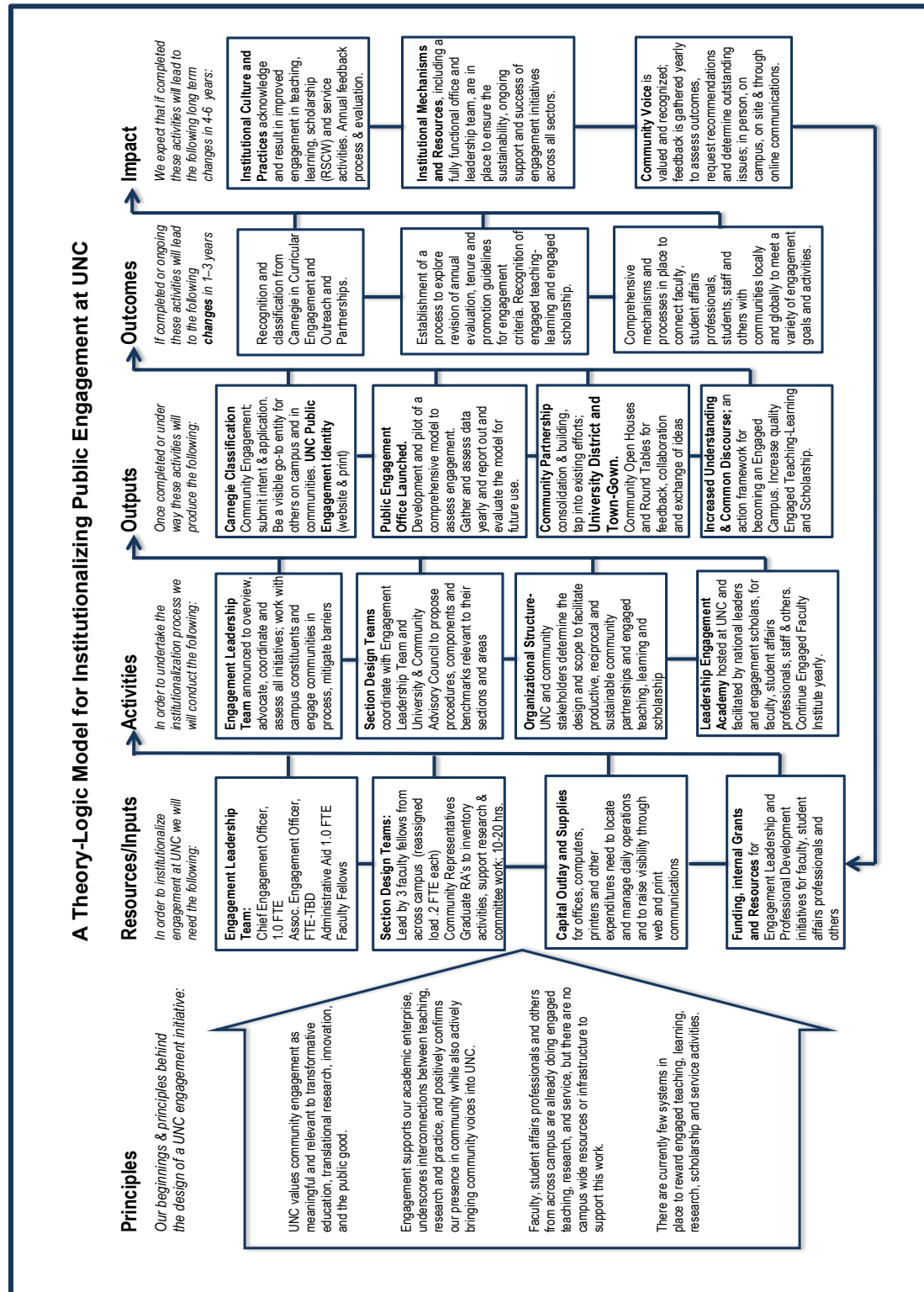


Figure 1 A Theory-Logic Model for Institutionalizing Public Engagement

Never before has the need for UNC to reaffirm our commitment as a public institution, educating and serving in the public good, been more pressing. Higher Education is experiencing an identity crisis in the face of public concerns about its relevance and efficacy, (Beere *et al.*, 2011; Furco, 2010; The Economist, 2012) rapid declines in state funding of public institutions, and political pressure to limit indicators of success to alignment with the current job market and graduates' income data. Notwithstanding this predicament, UNC is well positioned to reassert our purpose and place as a distinctive university that values community engagement as meaningful and relevant to transformational education, translational research, innovation, and the public good.

The goals and strategies put forth in this document are explicit and deliberate steps to better tell our UNC story. Ultimately, the next steps, and chapters in our story, will be measured by our ability to follow through and deliver on the assurance of a high quality, genuinely engaged, public education.

Context for UNC's Public Engagement Plan

University of Northern Colorado has at the very core of its mission and identity a commitment to shaping educational change, (Larson, 1989) and to education innovation in the public interest. Today UNC is home to the state's largest teacher preparation school, with its distinctive role as a doctoral/research university, and over 150 other thriving academic programs. UNC extends its investment in public education by centering on the notion of transformative education, as envisioned in the Academic Plan (2012) and illustrated below in figure 2. Transformative education is at the heart of what we do and so much of what we do is also contextualized within and connects to community. Engaged teaching and learning, and engaged scholarship are by definition focused on community.

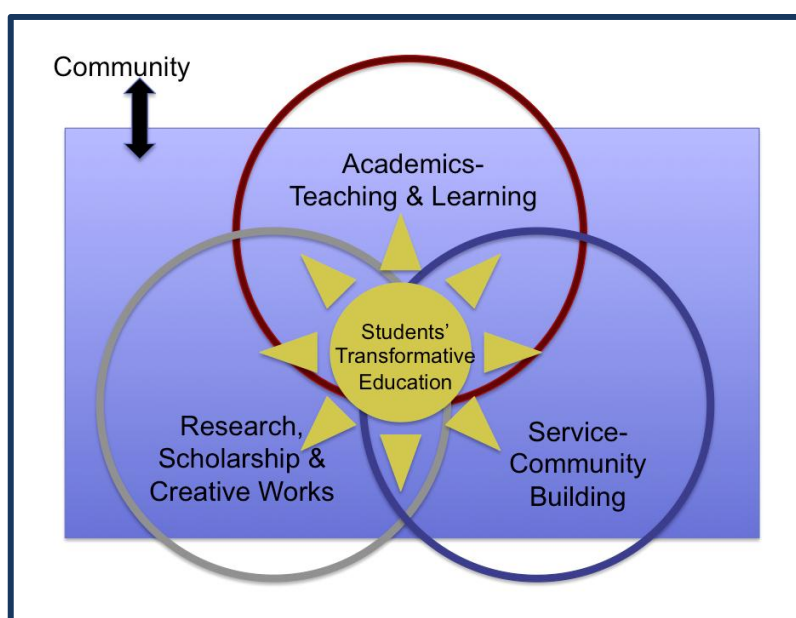


Figure 2 Context for Transformative Education at UNC

Engagement, when infused as a strategic priority, is a powerful approach to tell our stories and to hear the stories of the communities with which we partner. Engagement supports our academic enterprise, underscores the interconnections between teaching, research and practice (Boyer, 1990; 1996), facilitates the promotion of an authentic and compelling brand, and confirms our presence in the community: all of which allow UNC as an institution to increase its relevance, compete effectively, cultivate donors, and prepare students to be engaged and productive global citizens. Likewise, engagement allows students, faculty and others to learn from the communities with whom we interact and in so doing it becomes a means for others to have a voice in the direction of UNC.

Alignment and Content of Plan

UNC's promise of "Bringing Education to Life" constitutes the cornerstone for promoting the value of public engagement and a commitment to the greater public good, while also fulfilling our higher education tripartite mission (Furco, 2010) of engaged teaching and learning; research, scholarship and creative works; and community engagement.

While the comprehensive plan explicitly addresses how engagement can be infused into all eight priority planning actions (Figure 3) recognizing these as key aspects of our institution. This executive summary intentionally foregrounds three central domains or signature areas (1) Bringing Education to Life; (2) Advancing Human Understanding; and (3) Inspiring Engagement, to be the focus of deliberate engagement strategies over the next three years.



Figure 3 Infusing Engagement into UNC's Priority Actions

UNC Public Engagement Mission

At UNC we are “Bringing Education to Life” by promoting transformative education that infuses, supports and values reciprocal public engagement throughout our academic enterprise. In so doing, we nurture the interconnections among teaching-learning, research, scholarship, creative works, and practice situated in local and global communities.

UNC Public Engagement Vision

UNC’s commitment to public engagement will authentically enhance our mission as a public institution to teach, learn and serve in the public interest, and will honorably reflect the values and norms that we identify with as an inclusive, caring and genuine community that delivers education with humanity. Public engagement will:

- **Bring Education to Life** by engaging students in authentic teaching and learning across all areas and delivery formats in experiences that critically examine and apply their knowledge to real-life problem solving thus leading to transformative education.
- **Advance human understanding and address pressing local and global issues** through authentic community oriented, community based, and/or community built, mutually beneficial and reciprocal research, scholarship and creative works that respect the diversity and legitimize the co-creation of knowledge among students, scholars and communities locally and globally.
- **Inspire engagement and create meaningful connections** among students, faculty, student affairs professionals, staff, departments, programs, centers, units and other entities in order to share expertise, cultivate existing efforts, and develop new, inclusive collaborations and reciprocal partnerships designed to address public problem-solving and the co-creation of knowledge with communities beyond UNC, locally and globally.

Signature Areas for Public Engagement Initiatives

In order to focus and prioritize UNC’s engagement efforts, three signature areas each intentionally related to UNC’s academic portfolio and ongoing strategic planning initiatives are presented. The degree and extent to which the sub-areas are addressed will be contingent upon ongoing planning.

The signature areas are intended as an overview and the degree and extent to which the sub-areas are addressed will be contingent upon ongoing planning and the collaboration of the Chief Engagement Officer with the design teams and other constituents on campus and beyond. Signature areas are not discrete from one another or from the other priority actions, but rather they provide a framework for thinking systematically about how we infuse engagement at UNC. Figure 4 provides a model for what and how these signature areas might materialize in specific activities and reflects UNC as being an engaged campus.



Figure 4 A Systems Approach to Being an Engaged Campus

1. Bringing Education to Life: UNC's Core Commitment to and Value of Public Engagement

Reaffirm UNC as an unquestionably *public* institution and, in so doing, infuse our absolute commitment to a public purpose through engaged teaching, research and service.

- Promote engaged teaching and learning across all academic areas
- Support students as scholars and leaders
- Build a superior faculty of engaged teacher-scholars and student affairs professionals

2. Advancing Human Understanding and Addressing Pressing Local and Global Issues: Mutually Beneficial RSCW and Discoveries in the Public Interest

Support faculty, departments, schools, programs and others in their development as national and international leaders in community-based teaching, learning and scholarship.

- Support exemplary engaged faculty
- Fund engaged faculty research, scholarship and creative works (RSCW)

- Recognize engaged faculty research, scholarship and creative works in the faculty evaluation process

3. Inspiring Engagement: Create Meaningful Connections On Campus and Beyond

Provide and support opportunities that bring together individuals, departments, schools, centers, units, etc. from across the university to share their work and expertise, cultivate new collaborations with each other and with communities beyond UNC, locally and globally.

- Foster, support and grow engagement and collaboration on campus
- Engage the greater community as equitable and diverse partners in teaching, learning and research
- Support, commit and invest in community-built partnerships and business, internally and externally

Implementation and Accountability

In order to overview and implement the recommendations for Public Engagement during the next three years, this plan proposes the appointment of an administrative and academic engagement leadership team, comprised of a Chief Engagement Officer, a University and Community Advisory Council and Section Design Teams, consisting of representatives from relevant stakeholder groups and constituencies will support this work (see figure 5).

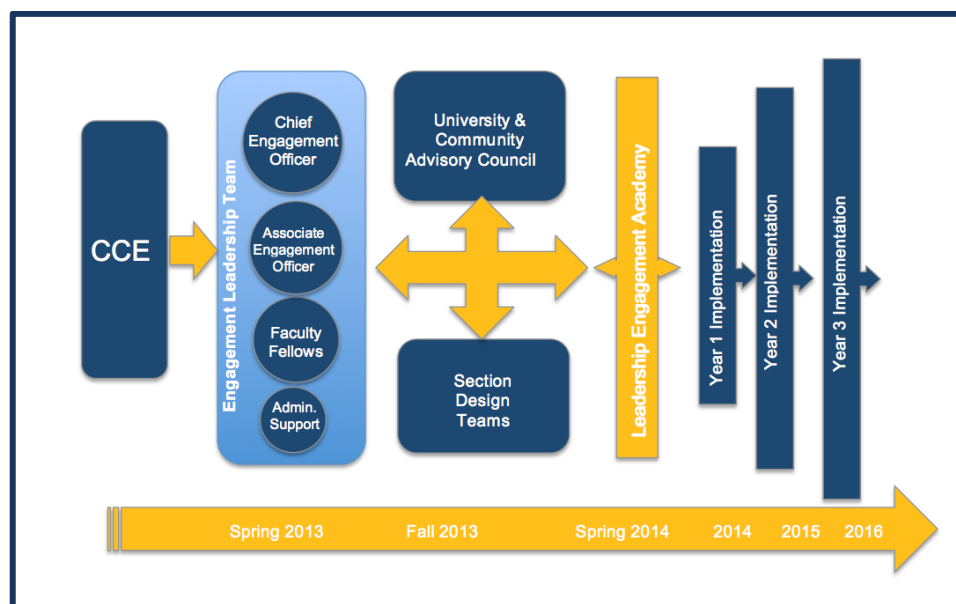


Figure 5 UNC Engagement Implementation Model

The design teams are not intended to replace existing, unit-oriented teams or supplant their work and initiatives, but rather to inventory these initiatives, recommend resources where and when needed to support them and develop strategies and action steps for further expanding, integrating and infusing community engagement across the university enterprise. To incentivize and support design team membership, it is critical for the university to identify, where

possible, appropriate mechanisms including but not limited to teaching and service reassignments, stipends, and formal recognition of design team service.

The Chief Engagement Officer, in close collaboration with carefully selected engagement design teams, will lead the institutionalization of engagement in the signature areas and work to develop engagement initiatives in other priority actions. Design teams will be comprised of faculty, student affairs professionals, administrators and other constituents with a vested interest in the signature areas and priority actions.

The specific mechanisms and procedures for documenting and assessing engagement, will be informed in part by design teams, and in part by enhancing existing reporting structures through a recursive formative evaluation (see figure 6) and in light of Campus Compact [*Indicators of Engagement*](#).

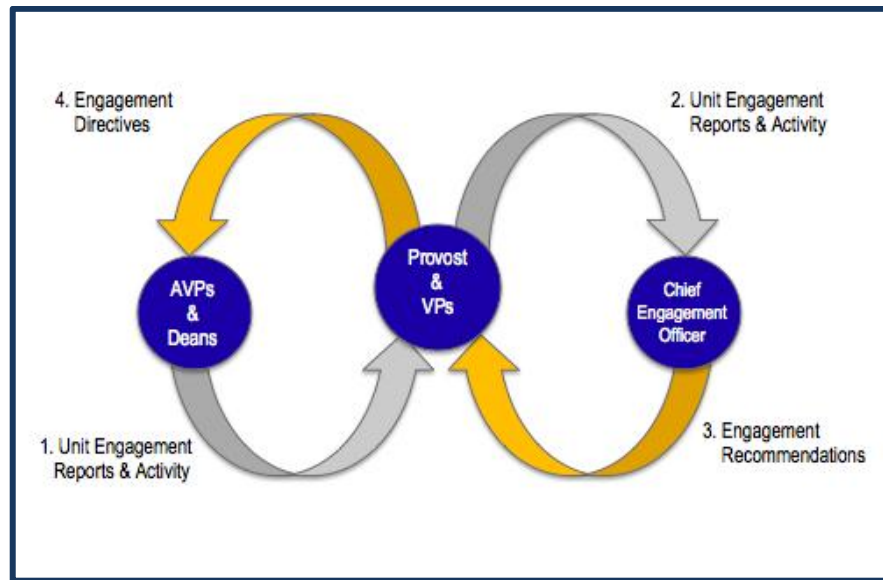


Figure 6 UNC Engagement Accountability Model

In addition, year 3 will also include assessment of the Engagement Leadership Team model and summative evaluation of its personnel. Assessment of the Engagement Leadership Team, to be overseen by the Provost, will include measures of its efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability. The Provost will use results from the Engagement Leadership Team model assessment to make decisions concerning its role in the next phase of the institutionalization of engagement, including whether, how and for how long the Chief Engagement and Associate Engagement Officer positions should continue with regard to their respective titles and position descriptions. The Provost will use results from Engagement Leadership Team personnel evaluations to make personnel decisions regarding retention and hiring.

The following three reporting aspects; Accountability for institutional performance, Assessment of engagement process, activities and impact on students, faculty, curriculum and community, Evaluation of public engagement projects and programs, informed by Beere *et al.* (2011) and Campus Compact *Indicators of Engagement* should be considered (see figure 7).

Indicators of Engagement to be measured across various Dimensions of Engagement: University, College, Departments, Faculty, Staff, Students, and Community.	
I. Indicators of Institutional Culture:	Sample Outcome Measures
<p>1) Mission and purpose that explicitly articulates a commitment to the public purposes of higher education.</p> <p>2) Administrative and academic leadership (president, trustees, provost) that is in the forefront of institutional transformation that supports civic engagement.</p>	<p>1) A clear mission and vision to Public Engagement either embedded within UNC's mission and vision or stated elsewhere.</p> <p>2) A CEO or other academic leader, who reports directly to the Provost and President and who overviews, supports and facilitates campus engagement initiatives.</p>
II. Indicators of Curriculum & Pedagogy:	Sample Outcome Measures
<p>3) Disciplines, departments, and interdisciplinary work have incorporated community-based education allowing it to penetrate all disciplines and reach the institutions academic core.</p> <p>4) Teaching and learning incorporate a community-based, public problem-solving approach to teaching and learning.</p>	<p>3) Courses are coded Community Based (CB) or Public Engagement (PE) and clearly identifiable to students and others in the catalog as such; most programs have at least one CB course</p> <p>4) Quality control measures for CB/PE course learning outcomes are in place; mechanisms for community partner evaluation exist</p>
III. Indicators of Faculty Culture:	Sample Outcome Measures
<p>5) Faculty development opportunities are available for faculty to retool their teaching and redesign their curricula to incorporate community-based activities and reflection on those activities within the context of the course.</p> <p>6) Faculty roles and rewards reflect a reconsideration of scholarship that embraces a scholarship of engagement that is incorporated into promotion and tenure guidelines and review.</p>	<p>5) Each year approx. 10 faculty will participate in the Engaged Faculty Institute; initial emphasis on support for faculty from within programs to build Engaged Departments.</p> <p>6) Engaged scholarship and the scholarship of engagement are clearly listed, understood and acknowledged in the annual evaluation and promotion and tenure process.</p>
IV. Indicators of Mechanisms & Resources:	Sample Outcome Measures
<p>7) Internal resource and budget allocations are adequate for establishing, enhancing, and deepening community-based work on campus – for faculty, students, and programs that involve community partners.</p> <p>8) Support structures and resources in the form of visible and easily accessible mechanisms (i.e., centers, offices) on campus to assist faculty with community-based teaching and to broker community partnerships.</p> <p>9) Coordination of community-based activities ensures the deliberate, strategic connection of various forms of engagement, including student service, service-learning, community-based research, and other community engagement activities on campus.</p> <p>10) Student voice that recognizes students as key partners in their own education and civic development and supports their efforts to act on issues important to themselves and their peers.</p>	<p>7) Internal awards and mini grants (3-10K) for engaged teaching and learning, and engaged scholarship are available. Funding and support for start up programs and partnerships are available when directly linked to engaged instruction or research.</p> <p>8) Establishment of a fully functional office for UNC engagement initiatives. Longer term might include satellite offices in local or global communities where partnerships exist.</p> <p>9) Coherent, agreed upon, criteria are used to determine the nature and assess the significance of engagement efforts for academic and co-curricular purposes; community partners are fully aware of student and faculty roles; all engagement initiatives are mutually beneficial.</p> <p>10) Mechanisms and procedures exist through student council, student senate or student activities that permit the development and recognition of student driven engagement projects.</p>

Indicators of Engagement to be measured across various Dimensions of Engagement: University, College, Departments, Faculty, Staff, Students, and Community.	
V. Indicators of Community-Campus Exchange:	Sample Outcome Measures
11) External resource allocations made available for community partners to create richer learning environments for students and for community-building efforts in local neighborhoods.	11) Competitive awards and funds support students and community partners collaborative efforts; connected to signature and priority areas, outcomes based.
12) Community voice that deepens the role of community partners in contributing to community-based education and shaping outcomes that benefit the community.	12) Community voice is valued and recognized; feedback is routinely gathered to assess outcomes, request recommendations, and determine outstanding needs.
13) Forums for fostering public dialogue are created that include multiple stakeholders in public problem-solving.	13) In person and online communication systems facilitate open dialogue. I.e.: UNC Public Engagement Website, Community Roundtables, and regular focus groups.

Figure 7 Indicators of Engagement and Outcome Measures

Next Steps for Institutionalizing Public Engagement

The Community and Civic Engagement plan outlines specific actions to meet the proposed goals for institutionalizing Public Engagement at UNC across priority actions over the next three years. The considerations, highlighted in Figure 8, include but are not limited to:

- Year 1: The deployment of organizational structures and provisions for becoming an engaged campus
- Year 2: Working to align existing and new engagement initiatives, including the development of accountability and assessment models
- Year 3: Being an engaged campus, reporting on progress and mapping out next steps for long term sustainability of engagement

Public engagement is not an add-on to the mission of an institution or the workload of faculty. On the contrary, when Public Engagement is adopted as a strategic priority it enhances the achievement of learning outcomes and students' perceptions of the relevance of their academic experience; enriches pedagogy and scholarship; improves the competitiveness of federal research grant applications; facilitates institutional re-accreditation; and improves university-community relations. It is our steadfast conviction that ultimately public engagement at UNC is advancing our central mission by "Bringing Education to Life."

Year 1 2013-2014	Year 2 2014-2015	Year 3 2015-2016
Organizational Structures and Provisions for Engagement	Aligning UNC Vision, Values and Engagement Initiatives	UNC is... An Engaged Campus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Announcement of Chief Engagement Officer 2) Formation of University and Community Advisory Boards; 3) Recruitment of Engagement Design Teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Chief Engagement Officer and Design Teams undertake campus review of year one 2) Complete and submit UNC's application for Carnegie Classification in Community Engagement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Assess the quality and integrity of first two years of public engagement initiatives. 2) Report to campus, provost and community on ongoing engagement efforts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) UNC hosts Engaged Campus Leadership Academy; 2) UNC delegation participates in Engagement Scholarship Consortium Conference for faculty, staff, administrators, and design teams. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Advance and support funding opportunities and professional development for new engagement efforts in teaching and RSCW. 2) Announce RFP for engaged mini-grants and professional development opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Design teams review annual evaluation, tenure and promotion guidelines for engagement criteria 2) Support faculty capacity building and promote engaged teaching-learning and engaged scholarship.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Implement mechanisms to support and align existing engagement efforts among faculty's teaching and scholarship; i.e. Engaged Faculty Institute. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Identify and mitigate any perceived or known barriers to public engagement in pedagogy, curricular and RSCW 2) Continue Engaged Faculty Institute with advanced option 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Identify and formalize pedagogies and structures that support engaged courses and scholarship. 2) Advanced Engaged Faculty Institute.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Consolidate community partnership building, tap into existing efforts, i.e. University District and Town-Gown. 2) Launch UNC's Public Engagement identity (website and portal and print based). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Design and implement formal structures to facilitate productive, reciprocal and sustainable community partnerships. 2) Host community round tables for feedback and collaboration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Evaluate and determine next steps for long-term sustainability of public engagement and institutional commitment 2) Support community-campus relations and partnerships.

Figure 8 Priority Actions from Three-Year Plan for Institutionalizing Engagement at UNC

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