

Network for Community- Campus Partnerships

Prepared by the
Community Engagement Task Force

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In his letter, *Forward with Integrity*, McMaster University President Patrick Deane reinforced the importance of the connections the institution develops and maintains with the community. The community engagement (CE) task force provided a framework for these connections in a position paper, which outlined a series of guiding principles and recommendations intended to foster the relationship between McMaster and its local and global communities. This guidance was supported and reaffirmed in *FWI: The Emerging Landscape*. In particular, the advisory group suggested that, in the spirit of limiting bureaucracy, the development of a network of community champions would maximize opportunities for mutual support and engagement with the community.

The purpose of the proposed network is to provide a shared framework for the University to support its goals related to CE. Many at the institution are already committed to fostering reciprocal relationships and supporting the University's CE objectives. Bringing individuals together is intended to limit duplication of efforts, identify synergies, and develop an understanding of the institution's shared expertise and interests in this area. Such a network will also benefit the community through creating efficiencies and facilitating the coordination of outreach activities.

Key Terms

The task force has articulated the following with regard to CE at the University:

Definition

Community engagement (CE) at McMaster University is defined as valuing the expert knowledge and passion that members of the community (both local and global) have about their communities and issues affecting them; fostering ongoing collaboration between University and community partners on how to better understand and consider the issues identified as priorities by local and global communities; and performing research, teaching and service with community members and partners for the public good within the local or global community.

Mission Statement

McMaster University is a committed member of the greater Hamilton community and broader society and recognizes that true excellence can only be achieved when we are working together with our community partners. We are mindful of the interconnectedness of our globalized world. We value community and public engagement that is mutually beneficial, supports our academic, research, service and civic outreach missions, and collaboratively leads to meaningful outcomes and sustained actions and relationships. Regardless of the discipline, graduates of McMaster will be citizens engaged in multiple communities in multiple ways but we recognize that our relationships within the community we call home are paramount to supporting the vitality and well-being of the greater Hamilton area.

Principles

Multiple overlapping strategies will be required in order to integrate CE into the mission and vision of the University. The following principles aim to guide this integration into all Faculties and administrative areas:

1. Community engagement will be aligned with all facets of the mission of McMaster University.
2. The University will value collaborative endeavours such as research, teaching, service and advocacy activities with community stakeholders.
3. McMaster University will value working with the community for mutual benefit, build relationships based on reciprocity, trust and respect, and recognize global interconnectedness.
4. The University will respect that there are multiple definitions of “community” and that different disciplines/communities will experience, value and learn about CE differently.
5. The University will support, recognize and reward CE among faculty, staff, students, alumni and retirees.

Network for Community-Campus Partnerships

The task force suggests that the group be referred to as a Network for Community-Campus Partnerships, as its mandate will be to provide a framework to support and facilitate the formation of such relationships. Members of the network will be referred to as Community-Campus Liaisons.

The liaisons will play a role both as an individual within their respective constituencies and form a collaborative learning community as a group. The network should not serve as gatekeepers or an approval board, however specific functions should include:

Area Liaison

- Serve as a Faculty/area liaison for interactions with community members and partners
- Support and maintain an awareness of initiatives within the Faculty/area through forming and engaging with a network internal to the Faculty/area
- Facilitate dialogue and collaboration within and between Faculties/areas
- Participate in the development of a local strategy to address an emerging issue or need as required

Advisor

- Provide feedback on ideas and proposals
- Provide guidance during development of ideas and proposals
- Listen and serve as a sounding board for consultation
- Serve as a valued expert on CE
- Assist in the development of strategies to operationalize the CE directives of the University
 - o Act on the vision of the institutional leaders

Sponsor

- Potentially participate in formal vetting of proposals and give endorsements or allocate funding e.g. through a community engagement endowment fund
- Sponsor campus-community events
- Create opportunities to interface with the community
 - o Establish a mechanism to seek input and feedback from the community
 - o Participate in the coordination of proactive outreach activities
 - o Actively identify opportunities for partnership and collaboration

Knowledge broker

- Share best practices and facilitate the preservation of existing knowledge in CE
- Maintain awareness of local activities and opportunities, then share this information with the other members of the network, who will bring it back to Faculties/areas
- Aim to reduce duplication of efforts
- Provide a mechanism/platform for incubation of ideas/brainstorming
- Seek to leverage existing partnerships to meet emerging needs or opportunities

Facilitator

- Facilitate collaboration and dialogue across Faculties/areas
- Streamline processes to facilitate integration of CE into academic activities
 - o e.g. create a 'checklist' of issues to consider and suggestions about how to succeed
- Provide a forum for dialogue about CE challenges, opportunities and issues
- Guide the development and implementation of professional development initiatives related to CE
- Assist in the development of relationships between relevant individuals or groups; create pathways for individuals to become involved in CE opportunities
- Facilitate useful and productive interactions with the community

Operational Components and Administrative Support

It is recommended that the network maintain a membership of 12-18 individuals as follows:

Faculty of Science (1)	School of Graduate Studies (1)
Faculty of Social Sciences (1)	Centre for Leadership in Learning (1)
Faculty of Engineering (1)	Administration (1)
School of Business (1)	McMaster Students Union (1)
Faculty of Humanities (1)	Graduate Students Association (1)
Faculty of Health Sciences (2)	Research Office for Administration, Development and Support (1)
Arts and Science (1)	University Advancement (1)
Indigenous Studies (1)	University Library (1)
Office of the President (1)	
Student Affairs (1)	

The network will need to adapt to changing circumstances and priorities. The group should be responsible for developing focused strategies leading to tangible outcomes based on the University's community engagement objectives and the needs identified by the community, which are expected to change over time. These strategies could map University expertise onto themes or geographical areas based on existing and emerging opportunities. A series of sub-committees [with membership including one or more liaison(s) and other appropriate individuals] may be involved in specific action items related to relevant strategies; there may also be a need for liaisons to participate in existing groups/committees during their term. Some campus- community groups already exist and new ones would evolve over time and may disband if/when the outcome is achieved or there is no longer a need.

Examples of potential sub-committees or sub-groups linked to the network could include:

Undergraduate and graduate students

Community members or partners

City of Hamilton (e.g. neighborhood action plans)

City of Burlington

Other satellite campuses and communities

Fundraising/University Advancement

Inter-institutional (e.g. Mohawk College)

Alumni and Retirees

Other institutional groups with complementary interests (eg. Experiential Education Directors Group).

It is expected that these sub-committees or groups would connect with the network through one or more of the community-campus liaisons; it is also expected that the groups will be interconnected and that the liaison will facilitate information sharing between the network and the sub-committee(s) or sub-group(s).

The network will require administrative support to organize and coordinate meetings, take notes, potentially create and maintain an inventory and website, prepare documents and follow up on action items. There will also be a need for administrative personnel to act proactively and seek opportunities within the community.

It is anticipated that members of the network will dedicate 1-3 hours per week towards network-related activities, discussions and outreach. The network should report operationally to the Provost, and should be accountable and responsive to the McMaster community. An annual report should be prepared to highlight the work and impact of the members of the network. It will be critical for the network to maintain structured communications and reciprocal dialogue with the local community and remain responsive and committed to community-campus partnerships.

Priority Deliverables

As a starting point, the network could be tasked with:

- overseeing the formation of a database of CE initiatives
- participating in the formation of internal networks within and between Faculties/areas
- establishing appropriate metrics to track and measure the success of CE initiatives
- coordinating data collection to rate progress towards achieving the desired outcomes
- participating in the coordination of at least one annual event involving community partners and University liaisons
- considering ways to generate awareness about the network and its mandate through a communications strategy
- developing a common framework and/or step-by-step guide to be used by individuals at the institution with an interest in community engagement
- work collaboratively to determine other appropriate goals and deliverables.