Forward with Integrity

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TASK FORCE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The community engagement (CE) task force has been struck by the wealth of CE initiatives, both curricular and co-curricular, involving McMaster faculty, staff, students, alumni and retirees. In order to better coordinate these activities and align them with the academic mission, the University must develop a broad understanding of the definition of CE and its underlying principles as well as a cohesive strategy on which to focus its efforts.

The task force has outlined key principles to guide McMaster in CE initiatives, including alignment with the academic mission as well as reciprocity and sustainability in relationships. Collaborative research activities that are guided by community stakeholders must be valued, as well as the multiple definitions of community and engagement with which individuals identify. Connections between the local and global communities must be identified and appreciated and participation in community initiatives should be supported and rewarded among the faculty, staff, students, alumni and retirees of McMaster. The task force has outlined a mission statement and series of strategies and recommendations to facilitate the vision portrayed in *Forward with Integrity*; these include establishing a network of CE champions as well as developing curriculum devoted to CE. The task force has recognized that multiple, overlapping strategies will be required in order to accomplish the culture shift that is needed for integration of CE into the activities of McMaster and the education of its students.

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BACKGROUND

The Community Engagement task force was assembled by invitation through consultation with Faculty Deans and Administrative Units, and began meeting in January 2012. The members represented a broad range of community experience and were given the task of considering ways in which community engagement (CE) could be embedded into the culture of the University. The group gathered weekly until the end of April 2012, and several meetings were facilitated by Dr. Patty Solomon, Associate Dean and Director, School of Rehabilitation Science.

Topics of discussion came from a variety of formal and informal sources that included:

- Open forums organized within departments and administrative units;
- Email communications;
- Conversations with colleagues;
- Structured meetings and presentations soliciting feedback (e.g. Faculty retreats);
- Interviews with stakeholders;
- In-person consultation with Andrew Furco (AVP Public Engagement at the University of Minnesota);
- CE Panel discussion as part of the President's Seminar on Higher Learning; and
- Attending community events (e.g. Volunteer Networking Breakfast, Graduate Course Project presentations).

It is important to note that various Task Force members have received direct input with the intent of having it documented as part of this process and for the purpose of using it as future directions are set and decisions made. All documents have been forwarded to the Assistant to the President, Special Community Initiatives, who will be compiling this information.

To assist with the work of the Task Force, the Office of the President brought in CE scholar and Associate Vice President of Public Engagement at the University of Minnesota, Andrew Furco, to consult with the group regarding the literature on CE and to share lessons learned through his experience at the University of Minnesota. In addition to meeting with the Task Force, Dr. Furco also delivered a lecture, *Building the Engaged University,* as part of the McMaster Seminar on Higher Education (January 2012) which provided insight into the purpose, potential benefits, drawbacks and considerations of CE.

INTRODUCTION

The "engaged" university is an international trend which is becoming the focus of strategic planning at higher education institutions across North America. CE is not new to McMaster and has been a distinguishing feature of the University since its founding in 1867 (Patrick Deane, *Forward with Integrity*, 2011). In fact, many faculty, students and staff actively participate in local, national and international activities involving research, education/learning and service. However, these initiatives are largely individual activities emanating from personal or professional interests. President Deane urged McMaster to deepen its commitment and contribution to the community by integrating it into the work of the Academy (*Forward with Integrity*, 2011). The task force is proposing that McMaster adopt a commitment to CE as a central part of the University's academic mission.

In order to develop a strategy that reaches all areas of campus, the McMaster community needs to understand the meaning and benefits of CE to the University.   Why should McMaster increase its commitment to CE? According to Andrew Furco, Vice President of Public Engagement at the University of Minnesota [1], CE impacts the institutional culture by:

1. Aligning with the mission of higher education;
2. Promoting good teaching;
3. Preparing students for the global workforce;
4. Using higher education's intellectual capital to address complex social issues;
5. Building global sensitivities; and
6. Encouraging cross-cultural exchange.

A stronger commitment to CE will improve and enhance each of these priority areas, which are well aligned with the goals identified in *Forward with Integrity*. Moreover, it is paramount that CE activities are pursued alongside community goals and interests, and that relationships are based on equal partnership. While the literature speaks fluently to the potential benefits for students and faculty engaging in this work, the research on community benefit is lacking [1]. As such, mutual reciprocity must lie at the very core of McMaster's CE strategies. A critical first step will be an understanding of what McMaster identifies as both "community" and "engagement".

Definition of Community Engagement

There are multiple (interconnected and interdependent) definitions of community, and the goal of the task force was to articulate a characterization which would support the academic mission, research strengths and civic responsibilities of the University and with which most members of the McMaster community would identify. For instance, there are communities of interest, geographic communities, communities of affiliation and communities of identity. The task force recommends that McMaster focus primarily on its neighbouring communities, which encompass the geographic areas of Hamilton and Burlington. However, it is recognized that we

are connected to the global community and as such, many of the activities of faculty, students and staff will continue to be directed beyond the local area. The group views the local community as a priority but not to the exclusion of our satellite campuses or other community initiatives. In a sense, a focus on the local community allows for McMaster students, staff and faculty to develop knowledge and skills in CE that can be transferred to other localities and communities.

Like the term community, "engagement" also has multiple meanings. Consistent with the academic mission of the University, engagement is research, teaching/ learning and service *in*, *for* or *with* the local communities.[1] However, engagement can be understood and articulated in a variety of ways among different disciplines. It may suggest community-based research, experiential education or volunteer work. It may mean learning from community members in the classroom or about communities through literature. The task force asserts that engagement should not be uni-directional (i.e. university going 'out' to the community) but should also encompass ways to make McMaster more accessible to allow the community to come 'in'.

Andrew Furco provided the task force with the definition of CE used at the University of Minnesota [1]:

> Engagement is the partnership of university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good.

With this information, the task force has articulated some meanings of CE at McMaster:
- valuing the expert knowledge and passion that people have about their communities and issues affecting them; addressing issues that the wider community regards as priorities;
- ongoing collaboration between academic and community partners on how to better understand and address those issues; and
- performing research and service that empowers community members as they strive to improve their own quality and conditions of life in their community.

These priorities will be incorporated into the principles and recommendations put forward by the task force.

Community Engagement at Other Institutions

The United States in many ways is ahead of Canada with regards to public engagement efforts of higher institutions, particularly when measuring the impact universities have on the

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[1] Research that is done *in* the community simply uses a particular locale as a research site or perhaps a targeted group as participants. Activities that are undertaken with the aim of benefitting the community are *for* the community, while those that are accomplished in partnership with the community are *with* the community.

economic, cultural and social fabric of the communities in which they reside. Many American universities have community, civic or public engagement etched into the foundation of their institutional identity, leading to a prolonged commitment to their respective communities. *Saviors of Our Cities* paints a picture of the most engaged universities in the US [2].

Increasingly though, institutions across Canada are striving to engage with their broader communities through research, teaching, outreach programs and beyond. An important driver for these trends is the Tri-Council Funding agencies, particularly SSHRC and CIHR, which list CE as key priorities. Other important sources of funding for these initiatives have included corporate partners, such as the York University – TD (Bank) Community Engagement Centre in Toronto, as well as family foundations, most notably the McConnell Foundation which has contributed $9.5M between 2004 and 2011 to support Community Service-Learning initiatives, such as the establishment of the UBC-Community Learning Initiative.

Nationwide, groups of engaged scholars, staff and students are being brought together to deliberate over the role of CE in the future of their respective institutions, and to provide recommendations on how best to proceed. While Canadian academic institutions, including McMaster, have long engaged with their communities in a multitude of ways, many universities are now striving to be more intentional about these efforts. Salient examples of this include integrating CE into the institution's strategic vision such as the University of British Columbia's Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Community-Service Learning and Community-Based Research, or Simon Fraser University's strategic plan to be "Canada's most engaged university".

Given the widespread interest at the provincial and national levels for advancing this dialogue, it will be important to maintain a connection with various university campuses on best practices and potential strategies. Of particular note, a partnership between eight Canadian universities (not including McMaster) and the Community-Campus Partnerships for Health organization has recently been formed with a vision to "change university culture, policies and practices in order to recognize and reward CES [community engaged scholarship]" [3].

Community Engagement at McMaster University

As the task force considered the various forms of CE taking place at McMaster, it became necessary to acknowledge the diversity and breadth of the McMaster community which includes faculty, staff, students, alumni and retirees. All of these groups play a pivotal role in the way McMaster interacts with the surrounding communities. An investigation into CE efforts at McMaster revealed that there are many wonderful initiatives happening amongst all of these populations but most are poorly communicated beyond the local environment/department. People do not know what others in their own sphere are achieving let alone what is happening in other areas of campus, or within the broader McMaster communities. There is no central source of information or resources to support the process of CE. Moreover, in some areas of campus, CE is not uniformly valued and is viewed as an "add-on", something that is done

beyond the work or study environment. As such, the University does not have recognition systems to acknowledge, highlight and reward successful initiatives and associated participants.

It was, however, encouraging for the task force members to learn about the wealth of enthusiasm for CE on campus. The Office of the President has created a staff position to support the University's efforts in this area: the Assistant to the President, Special Community Initiatives. There is also a central position supporting CE at McMaster, the Manager of Community Service Learning and Civic Engagement at the Student Success Centre, as well as more localized support within the Faculties. Furthermore, the University was the subject of investigation by Dr. Andrew Furco's graduate students at the University of Minnesota who will release a report regarding the current status and future of CE at McMaster.

McMaster is an integral part of the City of Hamilton, a city that has a waterfront and a "mountain", a vast industrial sector and burgeoning arts community, a struggling but resilient inner-city, expanding suburbs, a multitude of educational, health and social services, and an abundance of nature trails and waterfalls. Hamilton has many nicknames that are known by the general public both inside and outside of the city, some more appealing than others: "Steeltown", "City of Waterfalls", "The Hammer". Whatever identity people place on the city, it is one of great diversity in terms of both its physical and social landscape. Hamilton has seen the shrinking of the manufacturing workforce in recent years, as well as a surge in the arts scene and higher education, and growing immigrant and refugee populations.

The most recent Vital Signs report discusses many promising facets of our city including a recovering, diversifying economy and improvement in environmental indicators. It also highlights a growing income gap between high-earning and low-earning citizens, high poverty rates and low-wage employment, as well as a growing number of residents receiving Ontario Works (social assistance) [4]. The Social Planning and Research Council is a local resource for social research that discusses various interconnected aspects of Hamilton's social landscape including social exclusion among vulnerable groups, housing, poverty and homelessness, the push for a living wage, and more [5]. The Code Red series of the Hamilton Spectator made apparent the health disparities among Hamilton residents and how health outcomes are related to the income levels of Hamilton neighbourhoods [6]. The City of Hamilton and the Hamilton Community Foundation have made a long-term commitment to reducing poverty and improving quality of life in Hamilton, and there is also a current push for community development and capacity-building through the City's Neighbourhood Development Strategy [7]. McMaster is already occupying space in the lower city of Hamilton, and a current, significant project is the University's Downtown Health Campus which will provide comprehensive primary health care services to thousands of families and integrate more students into the downtown core. An important neighbour of the McMaster and Hamilton communities is the Six Nations of the Grand River territory, located 25km south west of the City of Hamilton. McMaster is currently connected with the Six Nations community, which has the largest population of all First Nations in Canada [8], primarily through the Indigenous Studies program which has been building community relationships since its inception in 1992 [9], and the Aboriginal Students Health Sciences office. There are many opportunities for McMaster to

build on its relationships in the greater Hamilton community, to both learn from and contribute to the surrounding communities across disciplines and through research, teaching, learning and service.

Challenges to Community Engagement at McMaster

The task force has identified a series of challenges that need to be addressed or overcome in order to facilitate the integration of CE into the culture at McMaster. One such challenge is adopting suitable definitions of both "community" and "engagement" that are meaningful and feasible to all faculties/administrative areas and that will allow every student and employee to see how CE will impact their time at McMaster. Connected to this is defeating the notion that CE is only volunteer work or service. President Deane articulated the connection between research and the community as follows: "In committing ourselves to a heightened level of community engagement we therefore commit ourselves unequivocally in the future to even greater achievements in research" (*Forward with Integrity,* 2011)*.* The University needs to undergo a culture shift in order to realize the reciprocal benefits of engaging with various communities.

Another potential challenge is that there is a clear gender bias - CE activities are generally female-dominated at McMaster. This gender imbalance could pose a threat to getting "buy-in" for engagement from the McMaster community if this is seen as "women's work" or if males cannot easily identify with current or future community initiatives.

The current external budgetary environment will put constraints on what McMaster can accomplish with regard to CE. However, the provincial government's interest in University differentiation [10] also offers an opportunity for McMaster to distinguish itself as "engaged". Positioning itself as a community engaged University is one way in which McMaster may distinguish itself from other higher educational institutions in Ontario.

Finally, time constraints on faculty, staff and students will continue to challenge our efforts to encourage community involvement. When CE is viewed as an "add-on", there are few incentives and, in fact, many disincentives to participation. The reward structures at the University (Tenure and Promotion, Merit, grades reflected on transcripts, performance reviews) rarely provide credit for community engaged scholarship, teaching/learning and service. True integration of CE into academic and research programs at McMaster, with concomitant incentives, will ease this burden and the culture shift will remove the "add-on" perception that currently exists.

PRINCIPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Mission Statement

The task force has articulated a draft mission statement to guide the University's efforts in this area:

> 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 and Objectives

The task force recognizes that multiple overlapping strategies are required in order to accomplish the culture shift that is needed for integration of CE into the mission and vision of the University. The following six principles, along with proposed objectives and strategies, aim to guide this integration into all Faculties and administrative areas:

1	Community engagement will be aligned with the academic mission.
2	The University will value collaborative research activities with community stakeholders.
3	McMaster University will value working with the community for mutual benefit and build relationships based on reciprocity, trust and respect.
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	Community initiatives will be mindful of the global world.
6	The University will support and reward participation in CE among faculty, staff, students, alumni and retirees.

Principle 1. Community engagement will be aligned with the academic mission.

Objectives:
- To ensure that every McMaster student will understand the value of CE
- To ensure that education and service excellence are informed by, support and/or are facilitated by the community
- To enhance excellence and innovation in research, education and service within our communities
- To link theory with practice in CE

Strategies and Recommendations:
a) Link CE with teaching priorities
    i. Integrate within hiring and reward structures for faculty
    ii. Instate an interdisciplinary, mandatory first year course on CE for all students (See Appendix I for further details)
    iii. Provide a variety of courses that feature concepts of CE
    iv. Establish incentives to support the development of teaching tools on CE
b) Develop a mechanism for evaluating student participation in CE [2]
    i. Provide a notation on the transcript for students who have completed an established minimum of CE initiatives
c) Provide a pool of funds available to initiate CE experiences for students
    i. Develop a clear process for instructors to apply and receive these funds to assist in the development of CE experiences within their graduate and undergraduate courses
d) Establish a Chair in CE with appropriate centralized administrative support[3]
e) Encourage interdisciplinary collaboration for CE initiatives revising the distribution of funds for service teaching

Principle 2. The University will value collaborative research activities with community stakeholders.

Objectives:
- To ensure that research excellence is informed by, supports and/or is facilitated by the community
- To promote effective, reciprocal knowledge exchange with the community
- To enhance excellence and innovation in our research within our communities

Strategies and Recommendations:
a) Link CE with research priorities[4]

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[2] Potential overlap with the Learning Portfolio/Passport suggested by the Student Experience Task Force
[3] Possible integration with the Centre for Global Engagement proposed by the Internationalization task force
[4] Potential synergy with Research Task Force

   i. Revise institutional policies for management of research funding and related financial arrangements intended to address gaps in Tri-Council policies so that wherever possible McMaster policies recognize and support CE

   ii. Integrate within hiring and reward structures for faculty

 b) Facilitate knowledge exchange with the community

   i. Create opportunities for reciprocal dialogue

   ii. Ensure transmission of research compilations to the community

   iii. Through tenure and promotion, reward researchers who participate in community engaged scholarship and/ or integrated knowledge exchange (IKE) activities[5]

 c) Facilitate training and support for students and faculty to engage in Participatory Action Research (PAR)

 d) Create a mechanism for reimbursing community stakeholders for research participation

Principle 3. McMaster University will value working with the community for mutual benefit and build relationships based on reciprocity, trust and respect.

Objectives:
- To enable the community to define its needs
- To foster collaboration and develop collaborative processes to design CE initiatives
- To dismantle unequal power relations and disrupt the binary relationship that has been falsely created between the "University" and the "Community"

Strategies and Recommendations:

 a) Require continued open dialogue with the community

   i. Outline clear intentions that lead to measurable impacts

   ii. Establish an advisory group comprising members of the community and related organizations

   iii. Host community forums to gauge community need and evaluate success of existing initiatives

   iv. Organize weekend events (e.g. poetry readings, lectures, art exhibitions) and provide free parking on the weekend to encourage community participation and attendance

   v. Develop an easy-to-access website highlighting CE activities at McMaster

 b) Ensure that anticipated benefits to the community need are made explicit

   i. Assess potential for partnership and societal impacts of initiatives

   ii. Identify prospective social/personal/academic benefits for participants

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[5] Integrated knowledge exchange occurs where relevant community stakeholders are engaged throughout all stages of the research- from developing the research questions to interpreting results and identifying implications. This process is thought to result in greater uptake of research. For more information see: http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/39033.html

iii.   Evaluate the impact of McMaster's current and future physical presence in its communities

Principle 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.

Objectives:
- To enable all McMaster student/staff/faculty members/alumni/retirees to identify with CE
- To encourage CE application through multiple pedagogical approaches, research methodologies and service activities
- To develop and apply an agreed upon "Charter for Community engagement" (including a mission statement, values, and beliefs about ways of working with communities)

Strategies and Recommendations:
a) Each Faculty/administrative area should consider CE in their education, research and/or service activities
  i.   Each Faculty/department will formulate its own CE plan with metrics for evaluation of progress
b) The University will develop a "Charter for Community Engagement" for all to apply in their CE activities where relevant
c) Provide opportunities in the classroom, in the lab and/or in the community to learn about CE
  i.   Facilitate opportunities for sharing/debriefing from those who have actively participated in CE activities to inform those who have not; link the discussion to the curriculum

Principle 5. Community initiatives will be mindful of the global world.

Objective:
- To operationalize the principles and effectively engage with community across a range of geographic scales

Strategies and Recommendations:
a) Focus on the local community but be aware of resonances to and interconnections with the national/global community[6]
  i.   Support and facilitate opportunities to connect local and global engagement
  ii.   Promote and enable reflection in the classroom on the link between local activities and global realities

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[6] Potential Synergy with Internationalization Task Force

  iii. Expand collaboration with other institutions, regionally, nationally and internationally

Principle 6. The University will support and reward participation in CE among faculty, staff, students, alumni and retirees.

Objectives:
- To enable all students, faculty, staff, alumni and retirees of the institution to participate in CE
- To promote the reputation of the University in the community

Strategies and Recommendations:
a) Develop a standing University committee consisting of CE Champions with representation from all Faculties and led by the Chair in CE
  i. Identify CE champions in each Faculty/administrative area
  ii. Champions would be expected to meet regularly and share information and best practices (Community of Practice). The committee would:
    i. support proposals for innovative projects related to CE
    ii. act as a review group to establish and administer a small cash award for faculty/ staff/ students related to exemplary CE activities
    iii. support to attend relevant CE conferences in Canada or elsewhere to facilitate the scholarship of CE
b) Increase communications about CE initiatives
  i. Highlight/profile successful partnerships and associated benefits
  ii. Use "Inspiring from Within" annual staff conference to communicate with staff
  iii. Develop and maintain an accessible, up-to-date website highlighting CE at McMaster
  iv. Create a regular column in the local newspaper outlining current events at or sponsored by McMaster
c) Create opportunities to participate and assist alignment of personal interest with community initiative
  i. Create a searchable inventory of opportunities
  ii. Establish a "CE day" and/or " McMaster CE conference" to enable interested students/staff/faculty/alumni/retirees to participate[7]
  iii. Provide opportunities for staff to engage with students on campus
  iv. Provide opportunities for staff across departments to offer their skills and/or build capacity in the broader community; integrate this into the staff role, where appropriate
d) Support the initiation/maintenance of relationships and initiatives
  i. Create an inventory of best practices on campus

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[7] Possible integration with the Renewal Period recommended by the Student Experience Task Force

ii. Establish a portal for CE through research as a marketplace for exchanging ideas and "growing" community-based research initiatives

e) Reward participation in CE, where applicable
    i. Incorporate into staff/faculty reward structures (tenure and promotion/merit, performance evaluations, collective agreements)
    ii. Develop criteria for assigning transcript notation for student participation in CE activities
    iii. Host a retreat to celebrate CE activities
    iv. Establish a President's Award for CE

f) Remove administrative barriers that impede interdisciplinary and cross-faculty collaborations with respect to CE educational initiatives
    i. Revise the distribution of funds for service teaching to enable increased interdisciplinarity for students[8]

CONCLUSION

To move the University forward through the next decade, President Patrick Deane's letter *Forward with Integrity* has set three priorities. These include the undergraduate student experience, research excellence and "the way we see and build connections between McMaster and the community". As Deane notes, McMaster has demonstrated a commitment to service and to the public good since its establishment in 1887.

In writing this position paper, the CE task force has articulated multiple overlapping strategies, some of which demonstrate distinct synergies with those put forward by the research, student experience, and internationalization task forces. All strategies have been informed by six key principles: 1) Community engagement will be aligned with the academic mission; 2) The University will value collaborative research activities with community stakeholders; 3) McMaster University will value working with the community for mutual benefit and build relationships based on reciprocity, trust and respect; 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) Community initiatives will be mindful of the global world; and 6) The University will support and reward participation in CE among faculty, staff, students, alumni and retirees. We look forward to open and constructive public debate with respect to our work and our desire that McMaster position itself at the forefront of engaged universities in Canada.

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[8] Potential Synergy with the Student Experience Task Force

CITATIONS

[1] *Building the Engaged University: Toward a Comprehensive Approach to Community Engagement*, Andrew Furco, Powerpoint Presentation to McMaster University, January 10, 2012.

[2] *Saviors of our Cities,* Evan S. Dobelle, 2009. Available at: http://www.evandobelle.com/SOOC%20Survey%20Overview.pdf.

[3] *Rewarding Community-Engaged Scholarship: Towards the Transformation of University Policies and Practices*, University of Guelph, 2011. Available at: http://cescholarship.ca/.

[4] *Hamilton's Vital Signs,* Hamilton Community Foundation, 2011. Available at: http://www.hamiltonvitalsigns.ca/images/hamilton_vital_signs_insert_2011.pdf.

[5] http://www.sprc.hamilton.on.ca.

[6] *CODE RED: Where you live affects your health*, Steve Buist, 2010, The Hamilton Spectator Available at: http://www.thespec.com/topic/codered.

[7] *Neighbourhood Development Strategy (CM11007)*, Paul Johnson, 2011, City of Hamilton. Available at: http://www.hamilton.ca/NR/rdonlyres/D4C2FAF3-8260-468A-9D97-A9A84DCD3498/0/Jun06EDRMS_n177317_v1_7_2__Neighbourhood_Development_Strategy.pdf.

[8] http://www.sixnations.ca/CommunityProfile.htm.

[9] http://www.mcmaster.ca/indigenous/about_us.html.

[10] *The Benefits of Greater Differentiation of Ontario's University Sector: Final Report,* Harvey P. Weingarten and Fiona Deller, Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2010. Available at: www.heqco.ca/siteCollectionDocuments/DifferentiationENG.pdf.

APPENDIX 1: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COURSE

Foundation Ideas

Regardless of the discipline, graduates of McMaster will be citizens engaged in multiple communities (academic, geographic, communities of choice, communities of identities etc.). The University is a place that prepares graduates to be critical thinkers, ethical participants and, perhaps, leaders in their communities. The purpose of the course is to involve graduate and undergraduate students in learning about community/communities, citizenship and responsible engagement. Ideally it is a course that provides the foundation for students to participate in community activities where they both learn from and give to communities. It might be the first of several courses available to interested graduate and undergraduate students that involve experiential/community engaged learning. However, recognizing that not all students are interested in or want to be engaged with communities, it may be the only course they take related to community engagement.

Content
- Definitions of community and engagement, citizenship, participation and leadership;
- Ideas about how the world works, social structures, inclusion and power;
- Innovative methodologies;
- Ethics, Altruism and Sustainability;
- Connections to multiple disciplines;
- Links between education and community needs and participation; and
- Emphasis on critical thinking and reflection.

Essentials
- Outstanding course design – motivating, fun, meaningful;
- Highly skilled and engaging teaching;
- Required course;
- Multidisciplinary course;
- Substantial, foundational and academically relevant;
- Elective courses in subsequent years in each faculty will provide further opportunities for community engagement; and
- Relevance to students' life stage, ways of learning and academic and other interests.

Format
The task force considered many options:
1. One course for all incoming students to be held in a large venue (Hamilton Place? University Athletic Centre? An arena? A Theatre?) Using multi-media, mixed methods and multiple student facilitators.
2. Each Faculty develops its own course that involves exposure to CE from the specific Faculty perspective.

3. A course that provides several on-line modules to be completed over the course of the first year followed by additional modules in subsequent years.
4. An abbreviated course consisting of TED type lectures coupled with some community activities.

With any of these options, it is important to build in some experience in the community. Senior undergraduate students/graduate students would be trained as facilitators to engage with students in the class and to provide experiential learning in the community. The student facilitators would work with small groups (10 – 15 students) to provide an introductory experience of community engagement (observing, shadowing, and visiting). For example, science students might go to the inland waterways research centre, geology students might walk the escarpment, humanities students might attend the art crawl, social sciences students might go to a city council meeting etc. The student facilitators would organize, conduct and debrief the community experience allowing for linkage to classroom learning and personal reflection.