

“Institutionalizing Community Engagement at UNCG”

Presented by Dr. Linda P. Brady
Chancellor, University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Written with the support of Dr. Emily M. Janke
Special Assistant for Community Engagement, UNCG

Prepared for presentation at the UNC Engagement Summit
Chapel Hill, NC
June 28, 2011

Thank you, Courtney, for your kind introduction. Good afternoon. This is an exciting day and a wonderful opportunity for each of us who have come from across the state to join together in conversation for shared learning. I am pleased that Leslie Boney, Courtney Thornton, and Suzanne Julian from UNC General Administration have brought us together to share strategies and successes, as well as to address how the UNC system can move forward in a strategic way to not only shine a bright and richly deserved light on community engagement across the state, but also to support and grow it in the future.

On the way to Chapel Hill today I was reflecting on my morning schedule and on how community engagement is integrated in all we do at UNCG. I began with breakfast with the Greensboro Economic Development Agency Operating Group, a community organization dedicated to recruiting businesses to our community. One of the most important draws—the seven colleges and universities in Greensboro that educate the workforce. Next I attended UNCG’s Speech and Hearing Center’s Summer Pre-school language-literacy camp. Staffed by faculty and graduate students, this camp provides an intensive two-week experience for youngsters with speech challenges. The parent of one student said her son had made more progress in 10 days at camp than he had made during the entire school year. Engagement is fully integrated in UNCG’s mission.

I’ve been asked to speak to you this afternoon on the topic of UNCG’s commitment to community engagement, particularly our path to institutionalizing recognition and support in our policies, programs, and structures. As many of you may already know, UNCG officially supports community-engaged scholarship in our university-wide promotion and tenure guidelines. We began the process in the fall of 2009, and the Faculty Senate and General Faculty approved revisions in April 2010. In national circles, our colleagues tell us that they have begun to refer to our P&T guidelines because of the way the document incorporates community engagement within the traditional realms of faculty work. We do not compartmentalize engagement but integrate it within the traditional faculty responsibilities of teaching, research, and service. This is a key theme that I will be discussing further today.

In his first visit to UNCG as the UNC President, Tom Ross also recognized UNCG’s efforts to integrate community engagement in promotion and tenure guidelines. He commended UNCG’s work in giving faculty credit for engaging in the community as part

of promotion and tenure and noted that this work supports UNC Tomorrow's focus on serving the state. He also commented that he would like to hear more about our work. We are pleased to share our own journey to where we are today with regards to institutionalizing and supporting engagement. We are certainly still on our journey, but I am pleased to share the processes we've followed, the lessons we've learned along the way, and our strategies for advancing excellence in this work in the future.

Each institution has its own mission, history, context, cultures, geographies, and partnerships. Therefore, no two journeys will look the same. Even so, we can learn much from each other about the processes. So while I am discussing UNCG's journey, I hope you will keep your institution in the front of your mind, considering similarities and differences, what is likely to work, and what may not on your own campuses.

No matter how passionate one might be about community engagement, it cannot become institutionalized without the institution's greater *capacity* to embrace and support it. By *capacity* I mean the ability and will to look beyond our walls within the academy to embrace and partner with individuals, groups, and organizations from across all sectors to address the critical issues of our times, from local to global.

One way to think about how we have built capacity for community engagement – and ultimately to revise key policies – is to build on the metaphor of a river. A copy of this image is provided in your folders if you are having difficulty reading the text. It was developed as a scholarly activity to help us understand and explore the various initiatives, activities, and structures that have built UNCG's *capacity* for community engagement. The purpose of this image is not to provide an exhaustive history of factors that led to community engaged policies. Rather it is to show the factors that led to UNCG's capacity to take a dramatic step forward to institutionalize support for community engagement, as well as the momentum that is behind our current efforts to become even more excellent in this work.

A river ecosystem starts as a trickle, originating as headwaters. The university culture begins with its historical mission and structures. At UNCG we were founded as the State Normal and Industrial School and then became The Woman's College of the University of North Carolina. Since our founding, our motto has remained as one word: "service." As public universities, we were chartered to serve public interests.

The capacity of the river grows as tributaries add water to the stream. As more water flows into the river, the water becomes deeper and the current becomes swifter. Momentum generated by the force of water can become a powerful force. Capacity for community engagement comes from all the activities and efforts of faculty, students, community individuals, groups, and organizations, university administrators, staff, and alumni. At UNCG these tributaries include offices such as the Office of Leadership and Service-Learning, and Centers such as the Center for New North Carolinians or the Center for Youth, Family and Community Partnerships. It includes student-led service trips, and faculty-led service-learning. It includes community-based research grants, as well as initiatives to support economic development. This diagram is not exhaustive. It

only provides some indication of the vast and myriad factors – both formal and informal, both individual efforts and collective initiatives – that have brought us to where we are today.

The capacity of a river is also enhanced by rain that falls from clouds. The swelling number of local, regional, state, national and international associations, conferences, journals, scholars, reports, and resources for community engagement has undoubtedly contributed to UNCG's capacity. These rain clouds are not unique to UNCG, they are shared by most, if not all of us in this room today. And we all have experienced the impact of budget cuts—a state-wide drought of another kind--on our ability to invest in community engagement.

The real question that people want to know is “how did UNCG do it?” “How did they pass revisions to promotion and tenure guidelines that incorporate community-engaged scholarship?” If we all originate as headwaters in the public missions of our institutions, tributaries filled with faculty, staff, students and community partners building momentum, and rainclouds of national initiatives to support engagement, then what was unique about UNCG that enabled them to pass guidelines to support engagement? After all, one can have the capacity for something but never actually take that first step. How did it occur at UNCG? It was a combination of forces: faculty leadership, administrative support, and the leveraging of national conversations and resources.

In 2008, UNCG was in the middle of many strategic initiatives including:

- Re-visioning General Education and our Learning Goals
- UNC-Tomorrow had asked universities to be responsive to the needs of the state in very direct ways
- We applied for and received the Carnegie Elective Classification for Community Engagement
- We were writing the 2009-2014 Strategic Plan, which included Engaged Scholarship as a major goal
- And, just as importantly, we had faculty and academic leadership who served as champions, putting community engaged scholarship and promotion and tenure on the agendas of the Faculty Senate and the General Faculty.

In 2008, Rebecca Adams, the chair of the Faculty Senate, who was also the chair of the strategic planning committee, appointed an ad hoc committee on Nontraditional Scholarship to address the question of engagement. As the chair of the strategic planning committee, Dr. Adams was also intimately aware of the UNC Tomorrow Response Planning document that asked universities to:

- Encourage faculty to address important societal issues, and reward them for doing that work well.
- Create incentives for faculty to engage in applied research, scholarship, and public service.
- Continue to support and reward basic research, theoretical scholarship, and creative

activities.

- Make appropriate University faculty more accessible to small business owners, nonprofit organizations, K-12 schools, and community groups.
- Continue to support the use of the tenure process as a way to validate that faculty candidates are highly qualified experts in their fields.

The ad hoc committee worked systematically and thoughtfully, considering the many perspectives that constitute the UNCG scholarly community. They were also mindful that they wanted neither to convey that one form of scholarly activity was inherently more valuable than others nor that any individual faculty member would be required to engage in specific kinds of scholarship. Ultimately their aim was to be inclusive. I believe it is also important to note that at a personal level, the chair was also identified as an engaged scholar who knew the challenges engaged faculty faced with regards to not getting adequate “credit” for their scholarship.

The Chair of the Nontraditional Scholarship Committee presented the process the committee would undertake to the Faculty Senate in November 2009. The committee was committed to addressing the issue of community engaged scholarship in university policy, seeking input from informed engaged scholars, and reviewing the current guidelines to propose recommendations.

The Chair also provided some guiding definitions, as we did not have a definition of community engagement or community-engaged scholarship that was widely held by the faculty. We had just recently received designation as a community engaged university by Carnegie, so the faculty felt that their definition served as a helpful guide.

The Committee consulted with many groups across campus, including chairs of the P&T committees, Faculty Senate, Deans Council, and Executive Staff. A faculty forum was also well attended by faculty.

In the following year, the incoming Faculty Senate Chair, Laurie Kennedy-Malone, chose as her theme: Promoting and Sustaining Scholarly Engagement. She wanted to see the hard work of the nontraditional scholarship and promotion and tenure committees continued. As chair of the senate, she co-funded a qualitative study that was conducted by the Office of Leadership and Service-Learning Faculty Fellow and the Assistant Director of Service Learning. The study examined the experiences of 14 community-engaged scholars at UNCG to understand how they defined engaged scholarship, their developmental journeys and scholarly products, and their experiences with annual reviews, reappointment, promotion and tenure as engaged scholars. The chair also co-sponsored a speaker series that brought in national speakers.

Early on in the development of the revised P&T document, we considered including a paragraph that explicated community-engaged scholarship. While it was useful, the committee decided to remove the paragraph as there were no similar paragraphs that explicated more traditional forms of research. It was felt that making community-engaged scholarship distinct from other types of research in such an explicit way would

potentially isolate this type of scholarship, running counter to efforts to include it as one of many viable scholarly strategies for research, creative activities, teaching, and service. Ultimately, it was decided to include an overarching statement about the variety of methods, contexts, and purposes to which scholarship can be applied.

While I want to stay on task in discussing the process by which UNCG has been institutionalizing community engagement, I thought you would like to see how this shows up in our university-wide promotion and tenure documents. Of course, you can go online to the Provost's website and download it as well.

In short, faculty on the committee considered the entire document and identified ways to infuse language that includes community engagement. One entire sub-section in each of the three primary categories of teaching, research, and service was devoted to community-engagement, but it was also included in examples throughout.

This slide shows an excerpt from the section on research and creative activity. Again, you can see how community-engaged scholarship is included as a sub-section with examples of relevant activities that would be similar to the other sub-sections. A careful reviewer of our P&T guidelines will notice that we list activities, rather than processes. For example, community engagement cannot be immediately categorized by the activity or place, as we know from the Democratic Civic Engagement White Paper, but the purpose and process are also essential. Faculty worked hard within the parameters of the existing format of the document, and we are proud of their work. To ensure that the principles of engaged scholarship are honored in faculty work and rewards, other work must surround and support this document.

That is why Dr. Emily Janke, Special Assistant for Community Engagement, and Dr. Patti Clayton a visiting scholar, were asked by the Dean's Council and Provost to draft a scholarly terms and definitions document. The document provides suggested language that integrates past and current UNCG discussions and policy with scholarly literature and national conversations to address how community engagement may be achieved through the scholarly activities of research, creative activity, teaching, and service – and, how it may be defined within unit- and department-level promotion and tenure evaluation guidelines, non-tenure track faculty guidelines, faculty annual reports, unit mission statements, and other documents and policies. In particular, the document addresses the question of what is community engagement, and how high quality community-engaged research, creative activity, teaching, and service are distinct from *community service* or *outreach*. A copy of this document is available on our website.

Executive leadership fully supports this effort. The Provost attended faculty forums held to discuss revisions to the guidelines and he spoke at the faculty senate meetings at which the vote was held. Similar to other faculty champions, the Provost framed the importance of community engagement as a way to address UNC-Tomorrow. The Provost also spoke of UNCG's 2008 designation as Carnegie classified community-engaged institution. As a community engaged campus, he suggested, it makes good sense that promotion and tenure documents are aligned with our identified classification.

Additionally, and this was a critical issue that was addressed repeatedly, he clearly stated that the proposed revisions did not in any way mandate that faculty do engaged scholarship. It simply ensures that it is recognized as a viable form of scholarship.

Finally, the Provost discussed the university's commitment to providing additional resources to continue scholarly dialogue about what community engagement is – and what it isn't. Ultimately, the faculty passed critical language on promotion and tenure – and they had the assurance that support would continue to be provided down the road.

As you can see, the faculty leadership and provost each referenced earlier tributaries or capacities that were already developed to provide a scholarly rationale for why engagement enhances work that we are already doing, and are expected to continue to do. They pointed to the faculty who were already engaged. They pointed to the Carnegie Classification, leveraging environmental factors into opportunities for change and building capacity at UNCG.

Developing partnerships has also been essential to this work. Offices from across campus contributed funds for a Speaker Series that brought three national speakers to campus throughout the spring of 2010. The provost asked the Deans to attend, as well as to encourage their department chairs and faculty. In total, over 400 participants attended 14 sessions over five days. I attended one of these sessions as well. This series was critical as it brought in not only those who are already willing and committed to this work, but also those who have not had much experience in doing or reviewing it.

We offer a webpage that provides a compilation of key articles, books, toolkits and resources for faculty addressing issues relating to P&T.

Another resource is the work that Dr. Patrick Lee Lucas has been spearheading in the Department of Interior Architecture and last year's Service-Learning Faculty Fellow. Dr. Lucas has been leading a department-wide approach to developing a model for integrating community engagement into the agenda of the department. Part of his effort has been to administer surveys to department faculty, students, and recent graduates to understand more about their experiences and expectations regarding engagement. In addition, the faculty in Interior Architecture have identified current and recent past community partners, interviewing them about engagement strategies and outcomes.

In a collaborative exercise, the faculty identified opportunities and limitations of engagement activities, fully recognizing the values instilled with students during their education, the potential for saturation, and the importance of good communication among faculty and students. The faculty also adopted a new approach to support internal collaboration and collaboration with community partners, garnering department resources, faculty expertise, and student energy around community projects for maximum impact. Last year the department worked with its advisory board to restructure the department/community website to reflect an engagement orientation. The entire process has been carefully documented in the hope that it will be a resource to others across

campus and the nation who which to encourage these conversations within academic departments.

Community engagement, if it is to be truly institutionalized, must not only be deep within a unit or department, or be pervasive across units, but it must also be integrated among units and activities. At UNCG, we are working to develop a strategy to improve communication among units to allow faculty, staff, students, and community partners to leverage the assets each brings. We intentionally sent an inter-unit team to attend the Engagement Academy for University Leaders in Roanoke, Virginia. The five day academy provided a springboard for the new school of Health and Human Sciences, led by Dean Celia Hooper, to identify strategic areas to support and sustain engagement. That work will begin this fall and will help break ground and provide models for other units on campus.

Our Special Assistant for Community Engagement in the Office of Research and Economic Development is currently leading a collaborative visioning and planning process to improve communication so that silos are broken down and existing resources are leveraged to help faculty, students, and staff be better partners with the community. We are taking stock of our strengths and creating sustainable solutions for long-term and significant partnerships. We expect that this process will contribute to the current efforts at UNCG to understand and enhance alignment of student curricular and co-curricular experiences as well as integration across faculty roles.

In his keynote address given at UNCG in 2009, George Mehaffy, the Vice President for Academic Leadership and Change at AASCU, urged us to consider the role of universities as anchor institutions. We have many important and productive relationships with many of the nonprofit organizations in Greensboro. But we have also developed many important partnerships with the local civic institutions, foundations, and business community to foster strategic economic development of the region. The economic, political, and cultural contexts which are all part of the new normal that universities are facing has blurred the lines between economic development and community engagement.

Opportunity Greensboro is one way that we are identifying overlaps between community engagement and economic development. A consortium of seven colleges and universities, Opportunity Greensboro is working with business leaders to make Greensboro a national model for collaboration in knowledge-based economic development. We are developing reciprocal and mutually beneficial partnerships among stakeholders to make Greensboro the place to learn, earn and live. Current initiatives include a major marketing effort, the identification of common academic programs (such as entrepreneurship and diversity) that serve the needs of the workforce, and enhanced K-12 education (especially around STEM disciplines).

Helping the communities in which we live and across the state become or remain as places that people want to live, learn, work, and play is essential. Economic development can be part of a strategy that addresses the root of social issues, such as homelessness, depression, and dependence on social service agencies and nonprofits. Our Associate

Vice Chancellor for Economic Development can frequently be heard saying that the traditional model of university economic development is “We the university exists, therefore we economically develop. Look at all the people we employ and items we purchase.” Certainly not all economic development is community engagement, but we are making a concerted effort to identify long-term partnerships that honor the principles of reciprocity and mutual benefit. Increasingly, we see areas in which economic development and community engagement overlap in significant ways that are full of potential.

In the current economic and political environment we need to be even more aggressive in advocating for the community engagement roles of our colleges and universities. Much of the public conversation surrounding budget cuts in the current fiscal year has focused on re-centering many of our institutions on the teaching mission, at the expense of research and public service. At the national level, a recent publication of the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research calls for the elimination of spending on research and public service at most colleges, on the grounds that these activities “add little, if any, to undergraduate education.”(Vance H. Fried, “Opportunities for Efficiency and Innovation: A Primer on How to Cut College Costs,” Working Paper 2011-12; AEI Future of American Education Project)

To borrow from Terri Shelton, our Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development, community engagement is a journey, not a destination. We are continuing to study our approach to understand the effectiveness of our activities and policies. That is why you don’t see an end to our river. Though, one might expand on the metaphor to consider how deltas, which run into the ocean, distribute capacity out even further into the greater community and to other institutions. Thank you again to GA for bringing us here today. I am excited to learn what comes from this summit and how a system-wide strategy can make a difference in the lives of students, communities, and the disciplines we serve.