

Integrating Outreach With Research, Teaching and Service at the College Level: Cases from MSU'S College of Social Science

Michigan State University has decentralized responsibility for outreach to all of its departments and colleges. Because each unit designs its own approach to outreach, there is great diversity in structure and program. MSU's College of Social Science empowers each college unit to be responsible for responding to community needs.

Organization and Leadership

Given its scale, Michigan State University is an unusually decentralized institution, according to Kenneth Corey, dean of the College of Social Science. One feature that binds the university together is its commitment to the research and land-grant mission. A self-selecting mechanism operating within the college contributes to a commonality of values; most faculty select MSU and commit to the research and land-grant mission or eventually leave.

Structurally, the college assumes a mixed form that focuses on the creation of knowledge through disciplinary programs (e.g., Anthropology, Geography, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology), the utilization of knowledge through professional practice programs (e.g., Clinical Psychology, School of Criminal Justice, School of Labor and Industrial Relations, School of Social Work, Landscape Architecture Program, Public Policy and Administration Program, Urban and Regional Planning Program), and multidisciplinary activities through encompassing universitywide programs (e.g., Public Policy and Social Research, Applied Developmental Science). All programs in this mix are involved in the creation of knowledge but approach it from different orientations, and all reflect a "transdisciplinary ethos and culture." This mixed organizational form is important to the synergies released within the college and is a strength in pursuing outreach. Because of their small infrastructures and the dependence of faculty on the rest of the college and the university for support, multidimensional and encompassing programs do not develop into empires but function interdependently.

As dean, Corey provides leadership and vision to the college, then gets out of the way. "I don't draw sharp points on issues, or take a high-profile position in the initial stages of projects. I try to relate to faculty cultures and subcultures and let natural processes occur, letting 'the thousand flowers bloom.'" He encourages communication among people. Success is based on nurturing diversity, taking units and faculty where they are, and encouraging them to pursue their visions within a community of scholars.

The reward structure of promotion, tenure, and merit both increases and nurtures the eclectic and diverse activities of the college: "'Just Do It' ends up not only being good for Nike but, I think, good for the mix of scholars we have here," says Corey. "What we have been trying to accomplish is largely scholarship across the mission, a foundation of research from which we derive our teaching and outreach activities." What follows are examples of the programmatic diversity that results from this approach.

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Outreach Principles in Practice: Joint Extension and Traditional Initiatives

MSU's State Issues Identification and Response Initiative

The public is demanding university responsiveness to community needs, according to Janet Bokemeier. In response, universities are employing strategies used by business. In this context, MSU undertook its State Issues Identification and Response Initiative. The goals of the initiative were to identify for decision makers the policy areas most in need of attention within the state and to mobilize university resources to assist in addressing these needs. With the advice of community-based committees in each Michigan county, three issue areas were identified: environment, economic development, and children-youth-family. Multidisciplinary response teams were formed to address each issue area.

The teams were funded through a common pool of grants, but approached their tasks very differently from one another. Two co-chairs led each response team: one from MSU- Extension, the other from regular faculty. Teams of fifteen to twenty-five included community and state agency people, Extension staff (including communicators) and regular faculty, in even proportions. Beyond these similarities, little was common among the teams. The nature of the issue areas affected the ways in which response teams functioned. For example, the economic development response team developed consultative resources, while the children-youth-family response team developed cooperative ventures with community-based groups and state agencies.

Responses from team members about the success of the program varied. The availability of Extension as a resource played a key role in the likelihood of success, but the culture of extension personnel was resistant to changes identified through the team structure. Extension and regular faculty approach their work differently, making it difficult to develop processes in which each would develop respect for and confidence in the other's competencies.

Several lessons were learned from the initiative. Organizational change involved in outreach should not and cannot be undertaken in a "top-down/heroic" manner. The grass-roots process must be allowed to work. Different knowledge bases must be recognized and owned by community as well as by faculty. Administrators typically prefer a clear strategy for accomplishing goals and expect people to follow that strategy. They want to feel direct control. The process was contrary to these expectations.

Collaborative initiatives require strong leadership to keep faculty involved and resources committed. Leadership should come from the president and provost on down, and should involve cheerleading communication about the initiative, promotion of faculty contributions to outreach, and demonstrations of leadership through resource allocations. A key for faculty is the reward systems, including time and the opportunity for

professional recognition of interdisciplinary activity — especially by peer-reviewed disciplinary publication.

One real danger in outreach programs is that communities can quickly become disenchanted with outreach when promised results are not reached. Differing visions held by communities and teams can lead to disappointments.

Applied Developmental Science: Virtues of a Virtual Organizational Perspective

MSU's Applied Developmental Science (ADS) Program is a new initiative, rooted in the land-grant tradition of the university and committed to outreach research. Most of the ADS mission is tied to human services and human service agencies are its main partners. ADS cuts across nine colleges, with the lead dean in the College of Social Science.

Hiram Fitzgerald believes that developmental systems theory has a direct impact not only on the methodology for studying group development but also on how a program is designed. Some aspects of individual and group development remain stable over time, but most change. "Systems theory provides an approach to modeling stability and change and to identifying factors which causally influence organizational processes," says Fitzgerald. "The temporality of change has important implications for research designs, service provision, and program evaluation because it is dependent upon longitudinal methods and hedged by multivariate models of the developmental process." All partnerships in the ADS must commit to a five-year minimum period of collaboration. In creating university/community partnerships, models for community development must be tested in a community setting in collaboration with community partners. Community representatives must participate as full partners in the design and evaluation of the programs.

ADS operates using five principles:

- **Ownership:** ADS acts as a broker, connecting faculty expertise with community partners. Faculty members then take over the project and ADS is no longer involved. Therefore, the personal investment of faculty is critical.
- **Shared mission:** A collaboratively devised statement identifies what the partners will do.
- **Dynamic work plan:** A timeline is prepared outlining when tasks will be performed, with emphasis on not overcommitting the partners.
- **Research rounds:** Biannual focus groups with all project participants are conducted, reviewing what has been accomplished and revising work plans.

- **Resource generation:** Faculty and community partners commit to generating new resources (neither the university nor the community is expected to fund the partnership).

Current partnerships include collaborative efforts with the United Way, the Girl Scouts, and county human service and health centers. In response to an audience comment, Fitzgerald agreed that the partnership requires a real commitment from community partners and some back out of the collaboration. For example, one agency asked ADS to begin developing a project plan before funding was solidified. After the plan was presented to the agency's administrator, he discovered that he was unable to identify any funding sources. ADS still hopes to collaborate with this agency in the future.

The Academy Informs Political Practice and Political Practice Informs the Academy

Universities have an important value to add to public policy processes by raising awareness of the complexity of policy issues. Richard Hula believes that "when we talk about outreach as if it were something out there that didn't complement, that didn't reinforce our scholarship and our teaching, then outreach is in trouble. But fortunately it doesn't have to be that way, because it's an engaging kind of process." As a result, MSU's Institute for Public Policy and Social Research has developed both instructional and noninstructional outreach programs drawing on faculty from the whole university and from other institutions.

Successful approaches for linking policy expertise to politics:

- **Formal degree programs:** The Department of Political Science has established a formal Master of Public Administration degree.
- **Policy Forum Series:** Luncheon fora are held in Lansing on topics of particular interest to policy-makers including block grants, presidential politics, empowerment zones, race in society, and welfare reform.
- **Michigan Political Leadership Program:** This noncredit, ten-weekend program provides training for future political candidates and leaders with practitioner-grounded foci on campaigning, policy analysis, and leadership skills.
- **Legislative Leadership Program:** This noncredit, three-day intensive program raises the complexity of policy problems by preparing new legislators and legislative staff members to deal with issues such as corrections, welfare, land use, health care, and leadership processes.
- **Other technical assistance and policy round tables.**

Future directions for program development in the College of Social Science include further cementing the university's relationship with the Michigan legislature, and making applications of its political and

legislative leadership programs available for institutions in other countries.

Alternative Structures and Design for Outreach: Faculty Survey Findings

The Evaluation and Survey Division of the Institute for Public Policy and Social Research conducted eight separate, in-depth studies evaluating MSU's use of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation Lifelong Education Grant, according to Charles Ostrom. The most recent, a faculty survey, produced the following findings:

- Most faculty are asked by off-campus groups to do knowledge extension that extends the university's research capacity to nonacademic audiences through such activities as applied research and technical assistance, demonstration projects, impact and program evaluations, technology transfer, policy analysis, and consulting to advance a unit's mission (forty-five percent and higher). Less than ten percent are not asked at all.
- Most faculty are interested in doing outreach (thirty-four and one half percent express a compelling interest).
- Many faculty are involved in knowledge extension activities but few are involved in knowledge extension scholarship.
- Most faculty perceive knowledge and instructional extension activities (those activities that extend the campus instruction capacity through credit courses, noncredit courses, seminars, performances, exhibits to off-campus or nontraditional audiences) as playing a minimal role in faculty rewards.
- Faculty are overwhelmingly in favor of better rewarding knowledge and instructional extension activities.
- Most faculty are considering doing outreach work in the next three years.
- The two factors most likely to contribute to a faculty member's decision to do outreach are intrinsic interest in a project and being asked to work on one. The university incentive system has no impact on the decision.

Discussion and Conclusion

A member of the audience asked if outreach activity affected tenure and promotion at MSU. Ostrom replied that new faculty at MSU are advised to go the traditional route for the first six years of employment, then “blossom” into outreach. Fitzgerald said that “My department has spent much time working on rewards, and what is emerging reflects a future where research is no longer the sole criterion for promotion and tenure.” Corey noted that the rewards systems vary among the departments. Faculty should not be required to do everything. The College of Social Science is diverse in the value systems espoused by faculty; some are more traditionally research-focused and some, more practice-based.

Given that service is a nebulous term, how do you evaluate it? Hula believes that standards should vary depending on the program’s goals. For the Michigan Political Leadership Program, the election of participants was a clear and measurable outcome. The evaluation of faculty is less clear. The separate evaluation of teaching, research, and outreach is not desirable, according to Ostrom, because the integration of activities needs to be emphasized. Therefore, using a mix of both quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods is important.

Several participants noted that the behavior of administrators can hurt programs, and that traditional bureaucracy may create problems. Planning needs to be done by the involved parties, not imposed by administrators. The allocation of resources to a program also can determine its success or failure; that allocation is in the hands of administration.

External recognition of scholarship derived from outreach still remains minimal. The editorial boards of journals are just beginning to address it, following the lead of the National Science Foundation. A group of editors of psychology and human development publications has been meeting regularly to specifically discuss publishing more in this area. Academics are slow to change. However, cuts in public funding are affecting professional associations, and policymakers are increasing their demands for socially responsive applied research.