

**Public Engagement at the University of Connecticut:
Strategic Plan (2011-2014)**

June 9, 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mission

According to the (2006) Mission and Purposes of the University, “we create and disseminate knowledge by means of scholarly and creative achievements, graduate and professional education, and outreach. Through our focus on teaching and learning, the University helps every student grow intellectually and become a contributing member of the state, national, and world communities. Through research, teaching, service, and outreach, we embrace diversity and cultivate leadership, integrity, and engaged citizenship in our students, faculty, staff, and alumni. As our state's flagship public university, and as a land and sea grant institution, we promote the health and well-being of Connecticut's citizens...” and “enhance the contributions of UConn faculty, staff, and students to the state, nation, and world through appropriate collaboration with partners in both the public and private sectors.”

The [Academic Plan](#) explicitly describes strategic steps to achieve a level of Public Engagement (Goal 5), interrelated with the University's other fundamental goals (Undergraduate Education, Graduate/Professional Education, Research/Scholarship/Creative Activity, and Diversity), to demonstrate “true partnership . . . with groups beyond our campuses in areas of mutual concern.”

Vision

The University will encourage, support, and recognize [public engagement](#) activities (across the domains of engaged scholarship, student development, and community programs and partnerships) by students, alumni, staff, and faculty, because of the centrality of such activities to the University's Mission.

The Office of Public Engagement will provide leadership to identify how the University can most appropriately serve the public good and develop institution-wide strategies to achieve this vision.

Strategic Planning Process

The development of this first strategic plan for Public Engagement at the University of Connecticut was based on a careful consideration of input from a broad array of stakeholders and a wide array of relevant documents. We reviewed the University of Connecticut Academic Plan (2009-2014), the many documents written over the past five years by the Public Engagement Forum, and the minutes from a series of four colloquia (with participation from over 100 faculty, staff, and administrators, 2007-2008) on public engagement, engaged scholarship, programs/partnerships, and measurement. Further, we carefully reviewed peer institutions' public engagement programs and structures. Focus groups (2010) were used to solicit information about the types of University public engagement activities that would help meet the needs of: community groups, public officials, and students, respectively. A facilitated retreat (2011) was held with members of the Public Engagement Forum in order to conduct a SWOC (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, challenges) analysis, which is summarized briefly (below).

The retreat concluded with members using the SWOC analysis to develop goals, objectives, and some strategies and action steps in each of the three areas that were identified as critical for the future of Public Engagement: Engaged Scholarship; Programs and Partnerships; and, Student Development, including Service-Learning and Community Outreach. Working groups from the Public Engagement Forum refined the plan within those three areas. The Strategic Planning Committee integrated the section plans, which were then revised and approved unanimously by the Public Engagement Forum at its June 3, 2011 meeting.

This document provides a 3-year plan (academic years, 2011-2012; 2012-2013; and 2013-2014) to promote the development and growth of Public Engagement at the University of Connecticut. It is divided into three sections (Engaged Scholarship, Programs and Partnerships, and Student Development), each with a goal, objectives, strategies, and action items (with anticipated dates of completion). Some strategies will require a commitment of University resources (i.e., time, energy, and/or money) to achieve these shared University-wide goals (Academic Plan, Goal 5: Public Engagement). [If any action items (not shown here in this Executive Summary, but detailed in the full Public Engagement Strategic Plan, 2011-2015) under a strategy are so indicated, then the strategy is tagged with an asterisk*, to note that at least some of the subsumed actions require a commitment of new resources.] Many action items, however, can take place within the timeframe of this plan and without the commitment of new resources, as the University works to meet its Mission.

Main Themes from the SWOC Analysis

Strengths

- University's public, land-grant, sea-grant, and space grant mission of service and engagement is embraced throughout the campuses.
- Many strong examples of engaged scholarship and ongoing partnerships.
- Improved coordination, recognition, and dissemination in recent years.

Weaknesses

- Resources are limited.
- Coordination needs improvement.
- Service-learning needs further development and support.
- Lack of faculty incentives and recognition for engaged scholarship.

Opportunities

- There is a strong foundation for the University's public engagement in the state.
- National trends toward recognition of public engagement, engaged (and particularly translational) scholarship, and data-driven decision making are helpful.

Challenges

- Financial crisis could slow our momentum.
- Coordination and assessment is vital to effectiveness.
- Need to recognize and support long-term partnerships.

Strategic Plan Goals, Objectives, Strategies, and Actions

Engaged Scholarship

Goal:

The University of Connecticut will promote the value and growth of engaged scholarship conducted by its faculty and staff, and considering the research opportunities for students. "[E]ngaged scholarship is scholarship that involves the faculty member in a mutually beneficial partnership with the community. By... 'engaged scholarship' we mean 'teaching, discovery, integration, application and engagement that involves the faculty member in a mutually beneficial partnership with the community and has the following characteristics: clear goals, adequate preparation, appropriate methods, significant results, effective presentation, reflective critique, rigor and peer-review.'" (Community Campus Partnerships for Health; <http://www.ccpd.info/>) According to the Academic Plan, as a land and sea grant institution, The University of Connecticut is committed to active engagement with the larger community. Goal 5 (Public Engagement) articulates the value of engaged scholarship, and Goal 3 (Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity) emphasizes that the University will "[e]ncourage this kind of practical scholarship, by ensuring that it is appropriately recognized in salary, tenure, and promotion decisions."

Objective 1: Educate the University community about the scope and value of engaged scholarship.

[Tied to Goal 5 (Public Engagement) of the Academic Plan and specifically to Strategy A, to "Increase the visibility and accessibility of faculty expertise."]

- Strategy 1: Discuss and share definitions and examples with various groups across the University of high quality scholarship that also meets an "engaged scholarship" definition.
- *Strategy 2: Educate those involved in the Promotion and Tenure Review (PTR) processes about engaged scholarship.
- *Strategy 3: Create a database of ongoing and completed engaged scholarship, engaged scholars (faculty/staff who can serve as resources to others), and community partners. Make available on the University's Public Engagement web site. State and national trends toward evidence-based practice and translational research call for better data and coordination by the University; in turn, communities may also see an increased need for collaboration with the University.

[Note: Database development is a shared strategy across the three parts of the plan: Engaged Scholarship, Objective 1, Strategy 3; Programs and Partnerships, Objective 1, Strategy 2; and, Student Development, Objective 1, Strategy 1.]

[“Identify, organize, and publish a database of faculty expertise” (Academic Plan, Goal 5, Strategy A)]

Objective 2: Increase the quantity and visibility of high quality engaged scholarship conducted by faculty and staff.

[Tied to Goal 5 (Public Engagement) of the Academic Plan and to Strategy A (broadly) to “Increase the visibility and accessibility of faculty expertise” and Strategies C, D, E, and F (specifically, in the topical areas of healthcare, education, environment, and human rights).]

Strategy 1: Improve documentation of faculty/staff engaged scholarship.

[Metric (Academic Plan, Goal 5, Metric 3): Number of external outreach/public service/public engagement activities reported by faculty. (+2% annual growth)]

*Strategy 2: Improve coordination that will foster relationships between and among faculty, staff, alumni, and students who have similar teaching, research and service interests/projects.

[“Engage faculty in assessing local needs and identifying problems in a holistic manner that strengthens the University’s translational research efforts.” (Academic Plan, Goal 5, Strategy A)]

*Strategy 3: Expand public engagement award recognition and funding opportunities.

[Metric (Academic Plan, Goal 5, Metric 4): Number of active outreach/public service/public engagement grants and/or contracts. (+2% annual growth)]

*Strategy 4: Improve dissemination of important engaged scholarship examples to the public and the University’s partners.

[Consistent with: “Leverage faculty expertise by encouraging faculty members to serve as members of private and public sector task forces and commissions, and share their knowledge through testimony at legislative hearings and in other advisory capacities.” (Academic Plan, Goal 5, Strategy A)]

*Strategy 5: Improve media relations to disseminate engaged scholarship findings.

[Consistent with: “Foster strong partnerships with media to encourage consultation with UConn experts, as appropriate” and “Provide opportunities for faculty and staff to learn more about the media and the possibilities that may be available to share their work with audiences across the state and the nation.” (Academic Plan, Goal 5, Strategy A)]

[Metric (Academic Plan, Goal 5, Metric 5): Number of externally recognized outreach/public service/public engagement program and partnerships. (+1% annual growth)]

Programs and Partnerships

Goal:

The University of Connecticut will encourage the development of appropriate programs and partnerships that are beneficial to the citizens of the State of Connecticut. Partnerships, as defined by The Carnegie Foundation, are relationships that “focus on the collaborative interactions with community and related scholarship for the mutually beneficial exchange, exploration, and application of knowledge, information, and resources (research, capacity building, economic development, etc.)”

(http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/descriptions/community_engagement.php)

Goal 5 of the University of Connecticut Academic Plan, building on the Carnegie Foundation work, states that the University will “Enhance contributions of UConn faculty, staff, and students to the state, nation, and world through appropriate collaboration with partners in both the public and private sectors.”

Objective 1: Foster relationships among faculty, staff, students and community partners including alumni who are interested in Public Engagement and Outreach.

[Tied to Goal 5 (Public Engagement) of the Academic Plan and to all six Strategies included in this goal. Each Strategy emphasizes the development of mutually beneficial relationships among groups of people from multiple sectors of the University, communities in Connecticut, and the public sector.]

Strategy 1: Cultivate and strengthen the Public Engagement and Outreach relationships among University of Connecticut Departments, community organizations, and elected and appointed officials at the local, regional and state levels.

*Strategy 2: Establish a database of outreach and engagement activities and expertise that can be searched by the public for information and that will also provide information about potential community partners. The data should include but not be limited to: (a) geographic area served (with detail on CT town(s) served); (b) number of individuals reached in outreach and engagement activities and participation by individuals such as spectator of event, attendance at a non-credit event, registered in credit program, etc.; (c) areas of expertise (classification system to be developed); (d) impact (measures to be developed). In addition to quantitative and qualitative data the database could include stories, case studies, pictures, videos and audio interviews.

[Note: Database development is a shared strategy across the three parts of the plan: Engaged Scholarship, Objective 1, Strategy 3; Programs and Partnerships, Objective 1, Strategy 2; and, Student Development, Objective 1, Strategy 1.]

[Tied to Goal 5 (Public Engagement) of the Academic Plan and to Strategy A to “Identify, organize, and publish a database of faculty expertise” and to Strategy B to “Work with special interest groups and local organizations that may benefit from use of our facilities and resources to develop mutually beneficially shared-use agreement” and “Improve the visibility and reach of programming designed to promote lifelong learning and professional development, including non-degree and online learning opportunities”.]

[Metric (Academic Plan, Goal 5, Metric 4): Number of active outreach/ public service/ public engagement grants and/or contracts. (+2% annual growth)]

Objective 2: Maximize the impact and sustainability of community programs and partnerships.

[Tied to Academic Plan Goal 5 (Public Engagement) and to all six Strategies included in this goal. Each Strategy emphasizes the development of mutually beneficial programs among groups of people from multiple sectors of the University, communities in Connecticut, and the public sector.]

Strategy 1: Plan, develop and offer a series of workshops and training institutes about building programs and partnerships that will enable UConn faculty, staff, and students, and people from communities and programs, to create strong, successful and sustainable partnerships and programs.

*Strategy 2: Build institutional capacity and compile resources to be used by faculty, staff, and community partners in developing new public engagement and outreach programs.

*Strategy 3: Recognize the contributions of community partners and mentors to outreach, creative activity, engaged scholarship, and public service. Communicate information about these various activities and their impact to the University community, the state, and beyond.

[Metric (Academic Plan, Goal 5, Metric 5): Number of externally recognized outreach/public service/public engagement programs and partnerships. (+1% annual growth)]

Student Development

Goal:

The University of Connecticut will enhance all students' development through increased participation in credit bearing service-learning courses and co-curricular community service activities. Academic service-learning occurs in credit-bearing courses in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility. Community service allows students the opportunity to enhance the quality of life of others in the community while enriching their personal and civic development and/or vocational training. Student curricular engagement (service-learning) and involvement in community outreach, service, and partnerships (community service) are recognized as key components to an engaged university that serves the needs of its students and the public (e.g., Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching; Campus Compact and The Research University Civic Engagement Network [TRUCEN]).

Objective 1: Increase undergraduate, graduate, and professional students' opportunities to participate in service-learning and community service, and provide incentives to encourage them to take advantage of these opportunities.

[Tied to Academic Plan Goal 1 (Undergraduate Education) and specifically to Strategy D, to "Increase opportunities for small-group, experiential and service-learning", as well as Academic Plan Goal 5 (Public Engagement).]

*Strategy 1: Identify and publicize all existing service-learning and community service opportunities.

[Note: Database development is a shared strategy across the three parts of the plan: Engaged Scholarship, Objective 1, Strategy 3; Programs and Partnerships, Objective 1, Strategy 2; and, Student Development, Objective 1, Strategy 1.]

*Strategy 2: Expand opportunities for service-learning and community service.

*Strategy 3: Create incentives and awards to encourage students to participate in service-learning and community service programs.

Objective 2: Enhance student leadership preparation and opportunities for service-learning and community service.

[Tied to Goal 1 (Undergraduate Education) of the Academic Plan and specifically to Strategy D, to “Increase opportunities for small-group, experiential and service-learning”, as well as Academic Plan Goal 5 (Public Engagement).]

*Strategy 1: Identify community service related student leadership positions and the leadership skills required.

Objective 3: Increase faculty/staff knowledge and awareness about student service-learning and community service opportunities, and provide them with incentives to increase their participation and involvement in these endeavors for the benefit of their students.

[Tied to Academic Plan Goal 5 (Public Engagement) and specifically to Strategy A, to “Increase the visibility accessibility of faculty expertise”.]

*Strategy 1: Create awareness about service-learning and community service among the faculty/staff.

*Strategy 2: Encourage faculty/staff to participate in service-learning and community service activities.

*Strategy 3: Develop incentives and awards to encourage faculty/staff to participate in service-learning and community service activities.

[Metric (Academic Plan, Goal 5, Metric 1): Number of students involved in service-learning courses. (+2% annual growth)]

[Metric (Academic Plan, Goal 5, Metric 2): Number of students involved in volunteer community service activities through Community Outreach and through fee-funded student organizations. (+2% annual growth)]