In-depth Approach to Enact Outreach and Engagement Agendas

Tools and Techniques to Establish Agendas that are Consistent with HLC/NCA Accreditation Standards

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Introduction

During the 2005-06 academic year, Michigan State University will undergo an institution-wide accreditation review by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. This brief is one of two guides prepared by University Outreach & Engagement to assist MSU units with coordinating their response to the HLC/NCA Accreditation Criterion 5 Core Components.

The *Handbook of Accreditation* states:

> Attention to engagement is woven throughout these Criteria, for it constitutes a basic understanding that an organization affiliated with the Commission cares deeply about how its work intersects with the lives of individuals on and off campus and with local, national, and global organizations … The Commission calls for an organization to make explicit how it defines its constituents and the service it intends to provide them.

The fifth criterion seeks evidence that Michigan State University has lived up to its outreach and engagement mission.

To help units establish or refine outreach and engagement practices to meet the stated criteria, the Office of the Assistant Provost for University Outreach & Engagement (UOE) has created this series of self-help tools. Direct assistance from UOE staff is also available.

Accreditation Self-Help Tool I
Checklist for Compliance with Criterion Five of the Accreditation Standards

This checklist will help you judge the degree to which your unit's outreach and engagement efforts meet Commission criteria.

Criterion 5a: The organization learns from the constituencies it serves and analyzes its capacity to meet their needs and expectations.

	Yes	No	UOE Tool
Constituents of the unit's outreach and engagement activities have been identified and documented.			Constituent Analysis Guide
The outreach and engagement needs of those identified constituents are understood by the unit and documented.			Constituent Analysis Guide
The unit regularly assesses and documents whether it should and can meet all constituent needs and expectations.			Constituent Analysis Guide
Constituent relationships are built and maintained.			Building Constituent Relationships Guide
The unit evaluates its effectiveness in identifying and meeting appropriate constituent needs.			Constituent Analysis Guide
The unit maintains a record of its outreach and engagement work with constituents.			Outreach & Engagement Measurement Instrument Data

5b: The organization has the capacity and the commitment to engage with its identified constituencies and communities.

	Yes	No	UOE Tool
Primary constituents and communities for the unit's outreach and engagement actions have been defined.			Constituent Analysis Guide
The unit regularly assesses whether it has the capacity to meet constituent needs.			Constituent Analysis Guide
Structures are in place to create connections among constituents and faculty.			ATKL networks (contact UOE for info)

5c: The organization demonstrates its responsiveness to those constituencies that depend on it for service.

	Yes	No	UOE Tool
Effective bridges among diverse engagement communities have been built.			Building Constituent Relationships Guide
The unit evaluates its constituents' judgment of the usefulness of its engagement initiatives/actions.			Evaluation Toolkit[1]

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[1] Under development.

5d: Internal and external constituencies value the services the organization provides.

	Yes	No	UOE Tool
The unit evaluates the degree to which external constituents value its services.			Evaluation Toolkit[1]
The unit evaluates the degree to which external constituents learned from their engagement with the unit.			Evaluation Toolkit[1]
The unit evaluates the degree to which internal constituents value its services.			Evaluation Toolkit[1]
The unit evaluates the degree to which internal constituents learned from their engagement with the unit.			Evaluation Toolkit[1]
The unit evaluates how well communities/constituents received students, faculty, and staff.			Evaluation Toolkit1

Accreditation Self-Help Tool II
Constituent Analysis

Why a Constituent Analysis?

To enact the University's vision of outreach and engagement, you must understand the scope and focus of your unit's outreach efforts. Scope defines whom you engage; focus outlines how you engage them. For example, the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at North Carolina State University defines the scope and focus of their outreach efforts on their Web page at

http://sasw.chass.ncsu.edu/s&a/outreach/outreach.html

A constituent analysis is one way to develop the scope and focus of any outreach effort. It provides a framework for understanding the environment of engagement—whom do you engage, for what reasons, and by employing what strategies? Most of us do this type of analysis informally as we work. A constituent analysis allows you to move with intention through the following steps to:

1. Identify key constituents;

2. Prioritize the constituents you want to engage;

3. Draw out the engagement interests of constituents as they relate to your work; and

4. Establish strategies for engagement.

Conducting a Constituent Analysis

Step 1: Identify Your Major Constituent Groups

Identify and list constituents by brainstorming the different groups and organizations that may benefit from your unit's expertise, skills, and resources, and those who might influence opinions about the unit.

Constituents can be individuals, community groups, organizations, agencies, or businesses. Connections with constituents may be one-time, project oriented, or partnership oriented.

- **One-time constituents** are those who become involved with your unit through utilization of the unit's expertise, skills, and resources in a one-time setting such as a workshop or community presentation. These connections are primarily knowledge directed, with no expectations of change among community members.

- **Project constituents** are those who become involved with your unit through utilization of the unit's expertise, skills, and resources in a time-specific project setting. These connections are knowledge directed, with narrowly defined expectations of change.

- **Partnership constituents** are those who become involved with your unit through utilization of the unit's expertise, skills, and resources in ongoing, time-expansive partnership settings. These connections are knowledge- and change- directed, with an emphasis on capacity building.

The World Bank speaks of "the voiceless for whom special efforts may have to be made." Thinking about smaller classifications within organizations, agencies, and other community sectors (e.g. men and women, political players, decision makers, content experts, collaborators, organizational departments) might help to identify important groups.

Working in a small group is a useful way to start. If the unit is large, it may be easier and more efficient to have people react to an initial draft of your constituent analysis. You can always add to or delete from it later. If you are doing this individually, bringing similar faculty/staff into the process increases the brainstorming power at the table.

Using the chart below, brainstorm your list of constituents:

	One-Time Constituents	Project Constituents	Partnership Constituents
Individual			
Organization			
Community group			
Agency (local/state, national, international)			
Business			

Step 2: Prioritize Your Constituents

Step 1 can yield a rather large list of potential constituents. Some will be very interested in engaging with you, others less so, and still others not at all. One way of prioritizing constituents is to rate their potential for engaging with you. Classify your list of stakeholders by your assessment of their interest and their available engagement resources (time, money, commitment, support for engagement, etc.).

	One-Time Constituents	Project Constituents	Partnership Constituents
Major priority Highly interested people with resources to engage			
Moderate priority Highly interested people with few resources to engage			
Minor priority Less interested people with resources to engage			
Not a priority Less interested people with few resources to engage			

A constituent's position on the grid shows you their potential for engagement and the actions you might take:

- **Highly interested people with resources to engage**
  These constituents are the most likely to engage with you; spend most of your efforts here and directly court them.

- **Less interested people with resources to engage**
  These constituents could engage with you but are not very interested in doing so. They may not see the benefit of engaging with your unit, or they might have been burned in the past by one-sided university/community engagement. Keep these constituents informed of the scope and benefits of your current community engagement.

- **Highly interested people with few resources to engage**
  These constituents could engage with you if they had the resources. Keep them connected to MSU and your unit. Finding resources together might be easier than overcoming the possible barriers of the less interested people with resources to engage.

- **Less interested people with few resources to engage**
  Don't spend time here unless you have an easy and efficient way to keep these constituents informed of your community engagement activities.

High ↑ Resources To Engage ↓ Low	Keep Informed	Seek & Maintain Engagement
	Monitor (Minimum Effort)	Keep Connected To MSU

Low ← Interest To Engage → High
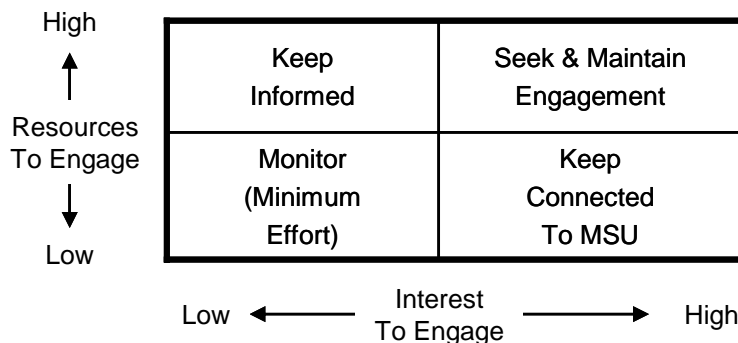
Decide which group(s) of constituents you will pursue with your outreach and engagement activities. This defines the scope of your outreach and engagement.

Step 3: Determine Constituent Interests

To outline key interests for each constituent identified, ask such questions as:

What is the constituent likely to expect from our unit?

What are the likely benefits for the constituent?

What resources is the constituent likely to commit (or avoid committing) to engage with our unit?

What other interests does the constituent have that may conflict with our engagement?

What financial or emotional interest do they have in the outcome of our work? Is it positive or negative?

What motivates them to engage with us?

What knowledge do they want from us? How do they want to receive it?

What is the best way of communicating our message to them?

What is their current opinion of our work? Is it based on good information?

If you have time, or as an ongoing practice when you are with constituents, talk to them directly about the above questions. People are often quite open about their views, and asking opinions may be the first step in building a successful relationship.

For each key constituent, fill out the following chart based on the above questions.

Constituent	Constituent engagement interests, including how they want to receive knowledge from us	Our engagement's likely impact on this constituent

Step 4: Prioritize Constituents – Phase Two

The second phase of prioritizing constituents is based on the fit between constituent needs and MSU's reasons for engagement. The Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC), an academic consortium of twelve major teaching and research universities in the Midwest, established a Committee on Engagement whose definition of outreach and engagement provides us with criteria from which to make this judgment. Use the table below to judge the priority of your constituent. The more "yes" answers, the greater the fit and the higher the priority.

	Yes	No
Would meeting the constituent's need achieve the CIC's objectives of engagement?* • 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 • Contribute to the public good		
Would meeting the constituent's need achieve MSU's business impact criteria? • Engagement is cost-effective or self-sustaining (extramural funding) • Faculty and staff have the capacity to enact the engagement		
Would meeting the constituent's need achieve MSU's approach criteria? • Where appropriate, multi-disciplinary (multi-unit) approaches are employed to reduce individual unit resource commitment		

* CIC Committee on Engagement, retrieved March 3, 2005, from
http://www.cic.uiuc.edu/groups/CommitteeOnEngagement/index.shtml

Step 5: Establish Strategies for Engagement

The analysis in Step 3 provides the basis for defining the focus of your outreach and engagement, which in turn is the foundation of your strategies for engagement. The chart in Step 3 provides coupled definitions of constituent interest in engagement with the likely impact that engagement will have on them. Rearrange the order of the chart listings to group like or similarly coupled definitions. Define the common theme for each grouping. These themes are the focus of your outreach and engagement.

For each focus (with its set of constituents), develop strategies for engagement. These strategies grow out of the detail of Steps 1, 2, and 3. The following chart is one way to organize the development of these strategies. For example:

To achieve this focus ...

1	*2*	*3*	*4*
What must we know?	What mutual understanding and agreement must be obtained and with whom?	What tools and structures must we use and/or create?	What do we do? What's our engagement strategy?

Columns 1, 2, and 3 will help to inform the development of the engagement strategy in Column 4.

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Accreditation Self-Help Tool III
Building Constituent Relationships

1. Create a Foundation for Relationship Building

Value statements are declarations of shared values and principles around which we rally. To consistently build positive and productive constituent relationships, your unit needs to articulate the shared values and principles that drive its relationship building efforts. Value statements do not have to be complex and lengthy. For example, the Kellogg Foundation has identified eight characteristics of vital partnerships between universities and communities that can be easily adapted into value statements.

Kellogg Defined Characteristics	Kellogg Characteristics Restated as Value Statements
Engaged higher education institutions and communities:	We value:
1. See their present and future well-being as inextricably linked	1. Seeing our present and future well-being as inextricably linked with that of our constituents
2. Collaboratively plan and design mutually beneficial programs and outcomes	2. Collaboratively planning and designing mutually beneficial programs and outcomes with our constituents
3. Engage in reciprocal learning	3. Engaging in reciprocal learning with our constituents
4. Respect the history, culture, knowledge, and wisdom of the other	4. Respecting the history, culture, knowledge, and wisdom of our constituents
5. Create structures that promote open communication and equity with one another	5. Creating structures that promote open communication and equity with our constituents
6. Have high expectations for their performance and involvement with each other	6. Having high expectations for our performance and involvement with our constituents
7. Value and promote diversity	7. Promoting diversity
8. Regularly conduct a joint assessment of their partnership and report results	8. Regularly conducting joint assessments with constituents of our partnerships and reporting results

The CIC Committee on Engagement's definition of engagement could also be used as a source for value statements. For example:

> We value constituent relationships that:
> - Enrich scholarship and creative activities
> - Enhance curriculum, teaching and learning
> - Prepare educated, engaged citizens
> - Strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility
> - Address critical societal issues
> - Contribute to the public good

The Josephson Institute outlines six ethical values—trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship—as key to improving the ethical quality of our decisions. These might serve as another framework from which to develop constituent relationship value statements. Explanations of the six ethical values can be found at http://www.josephsoninstitute.org/MED/MED-2sixpillars.htm

2. Understand the Types of University/Constituent Relationships

A few words about university engagement specialists:

1. The role of "engagement specialist" is based on competency, not position. A competent engagement specialist can be a faculty member, staff member, or graduate student.

2. Some engagement specialists are accustomed to working in a partnership context because of their background. For example, in some disciplines seeing a situation in context is normative, for example: industrial psychology, ecological psychology, criminal justice, social work, labor and industrial relations, agricultural economics, resource development, and family and child ecology.

3. A dysfunctional relationship can occur within any of the types of relationship outlined below if either party feels used as a result of the connection.

Attributes of University Engagement

Evolution of Types of Relationships
and their Corresponding Roles and Competencies in University/Community Connections

Type of Constituent Relationship	Role of the University Engager	Competency of the University Engager	Strategies of Engagement	Reasons to Engage	Examples of Engagement

ONE-TIME Primarily knowledge directed, no expectation of change	1. Make or broker the connection (content requirement)
	  a. assess requirements
	  b. assess if connection/product worked
	2. Provide desired content
		1. Speak the language of the community (internal/ external)
		2. Know campus resources/ enactors
		3. Translate content into useful community applications
			1. Adapt to multiple learning styles
			2. Limit content
			3. Impart expert knowledge
			4. Interact
			5. Experience
			6. Create dialogue
				1. Build strategy advantage
				2. Give incentive to take next step (initiate potential partnership/ project)
				3. Give ability to partners
				4. Network
				5. Transfer information effectively
				6. Produce good will
				7. Provide clearer sense of university outreach partnership
					• Presentation
					• Interactive workshop
					• Sample of a product
					• Provision of a service
					• Ongoing workshop
					• Conference

PROJECT Knowledge directed and narrowly defined expectation of change	1. Nurture limited relationship (context requirement: Where is the partnership developmentally? Does the campus match equal the level of development?) 2. Negotiate project management (agree on products) 3. Negotiate/resolve conflict regarding product	1. Clearly define products 2. Utilize project management skills 3. Utilize conflict resolution skills	1. Expand content 2. Nurture contacts 3. Train 4. Manage project 5. Evaluate 6. Facilitate	1. Initiate relationships 2. Bring in money 3. Create consumer benefits 4. Create potential partnership 5. Help decide whether to pursue longer-lasting relationship	• General training • Evaluation project • Identifiable component within a partnership • Specific facilitation effort

Type of Constituent Relationship	Role of the University Engager	Competency of the University Engager	Strategies of Engagement	Reasons to Engage	Examples of Engagement
PARTNERSHIP Knowledge and change directed, with emphasis on capacity building	1. Assess and negotiate partnership arrangement, and set a common vision 2. Negotiate/resolve relationship and other conflicts 3. Develop resources (financial and human) 4. Support functions and public relations 5. Facilitate continuity of partnership/use of products 6. Build community capacity 7. Identify/facilitate potential research efforts	1. Be comfortable with morphing 2. Have facilitative framework 3. Know when it's time to leave 4. Be comfortable with multiple disciplines 5. Be able to seek multiple perspectives/be comfortable with not having the answers 6. Be open to many points of view and able to connect them 7. Generate consensus ("We can live with it") 8. Be comfortable with multiple internal/external relationships 9. Understand tensions in the campus/community partnership 10. Translate the community work into products that are valued within the university	1. Broker the campus/community connection 2. Focus on relationship 3. Focus on orientation 4. Share vision 5. Build mutual capacity 6. Share benefits	1. Create forum for a potential long term research agenda 2. Create shared benefits 3. Expand scholarship on outreach 4. Build on engagement 5. Create integrated/comprehensive approach	• Long term/multi-year • Integrates a multidisciplinary approach • Two types of partnerships: (a) capacity building is primarily one-sided (either the university or the community); (b) capacity building is two-way

3. Align Your Unit Toward Engagement

There are no cookie-cutter approaches to building constituent relationships. You learn as you go. This does not mean, however, that constituent relationship building efforts should be random or ad hoc. The intention of building positive constituent relationships can be increased by aligning the unit toward that purpose. Alignment increases as the following principles are enacted:

- **Make engagement a priority in every unit**
  Make engagement part of the core mission of the unit.

- **Develop plans for engagement**
  Recognize that engagement is not something separate and distinct from the unit, but part of its core mission.

- **Encourage interdisciplinary work**
  Find new ways to encourage interdisciplinary research, teaching, and learning as part of your engagement agenda.

- **Create new incentives to advance engagement**
  Within the resources that you control, develop incentives to encourage faculty and student participation in the engagement agenda.

- **Secure stable and ongoing funding**
  Seek secure funding streams to support engagement activities, perhaps through integral re-allocation of funds or through establishment of a federal (or state, local, or private) matching fund.

For each principle, develop strategies for enactment. These strategies grow out of the details of Steps 1, 2, and 3. Use the following chart to organize the development of these strategies:

To achieve this principle ...

1	2	3	4
What must we know?	What mutual understanding and agreement must be obtained and with whom?	What tools and structures must we use and/or create?	What do we do? What's our enactment strategy?

4. Develop a Constituent Strategy

Constituent strategies usually involve assessing current and potential relationships, deciding on priorities, and developing action plans to achieve those priorities. A constituent analysis allows us to move with intention as we:

1. Identify key constituents

2. Prioritize the constituents with whom we want to engage

3. Draw out the engagement interests of constituents as they relate to our work

4. Establish strategies for engagement

To develop a constituent strategy, refer to and utilize Accreditation Self-Help Tool I: Constituent Analysis Guide (pp. 4-8 of this document).

5. Build Trusting Relationships

The literature on social capital provides a set of themes which are useful when considering how to build trusting, mutually beneficial relationships. Building social capital involves:

1. **Participation in networks**
   Social capital is built through voluntary and equitable relationships between people and groups. Networks that you create with your constituents must be networks of equals, not networks of disproportionate power where the knowledge experts wield all the power.

2. **Reciprocity**
   Caring about one another's interests must be a central part of the relationship you build with your constituents.

3. **Trust**
   Acting in mutually supportive ways helps to build trust with your constituents. It also promotes others' belief in your honesty and reliability.

4. **Social norms**
   Articulating joint expectations with constituents concerning how you will behave within these relations helps to set social norms—the informal social control that makes formal rules unnecessary.

5. **Commons**
   Joint ownership of the knowledge generated is a result of the relationship—the combined effect of trust, networks, norms and reciprocity.

6. **Proactivity**
   You must be willing to voluntarily engage each constituent in a participative relationship as co-creators.

6. Evaluate and Improve Relationships

As with any initiative, it is a good idea to periodically take stock of how you are doing. University Outreach & Engagement is developing a series of tools and methods to evaluate the effectiveness of identifying and meeting appropriate constituent needs.

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