Facilitating University Engagement with Schools

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Abstract

During the past decade, leaders of university engagement have strived to create reciprocal relationships between their campuses and the external partners they serve. Relying on a knowledge flow theoretical framework, this article examines the concept of university engagement in the context of school-university partnerships. Challenges and opportunities for promoting university engagement with schools are illustrated through a case study analysis. Recommendations for improving university-school partnerships are presented in the context of metropolitan universities.

During the 1980s, widespread criticisms about the quality of American schools fueled a new generation of educational reforms aimed at improving pre-college education through school-university partnerships (Atkin, Kennedy, and Patrick 1989; Gomez et al. 1992). Initially viewed as a fad that would burn out, school-university partnerships have instead gained momentum and are growing, evolving, and adapting to meet the needs of students and communities they serve (Osguthorpe et al. 1995). These collaborations have especially gained steam in urban settings. Intensive school-university engagement efforts have developed out of the belief that problems in urban schools are deeply rooted and require resources from the broader community to address larger societal problems (Zimpher and Howey 2004).

Over the past twenty-five years, school-university partnerships have evolved into a number of different forms. In their extensive review of literature, Ravid and Handler (2001) identified four school-university partnership models. First, schools and universities may enter into formal or informal relationships to provide teacher training through a professional development school (PDS). The PDS model of school-university partnerships is primarily focused on preparing future teachers. A second mode of school-university interaction is the consultation model. In this arrangement, university faculty members provide resources and professional expertise directly to teachers to improve classroom practices. This approach is typically a one-way dissemination of knowledge in which faculty pass along new findings or innovations for teachers to apply in the classroom.

Third, school-university partnerships can take the form of one-on-one collaborations. In this model, faculty and teachers initiate research projects or pilot curriculum to further knowledge in the field and improve teaching and learning. Unlike the consultation model, the one-to-one collaborative features a more even exchange between university faculty and teachers. These partnerships are characterized by close interpersonal relationships and often result in mentoring roles assumed by university

faculty members. Finally, universities and schools may undertake multiple projects under one umbrella organization acting as a project facilitator. These partnerships are developed through a shared agenda determined by school and university representatives. In this model, a university center is typically created which provides oversight for projects, keeps records, and solves problems related to the partnership (Ravid and Handler 2001).

Of the four partnership types identified by Ravid and Handler (2001), my article is primarily concerned with umbrella arrangements where school and university partners collaborate around a shared agenda to improve teaching and learning. Specifically, I focus on the capacity of universities to create reciprocal relationships with schools through equitable and mutually beneficial partnerships. This issue is significant since school-university partnerships are typically guided by values of reciprocity, equality, and shared beliefs about issues of equity, teaching, and learning (Teitel 1998).

The purpose of this article is three-fold. First, I aim to create a theoretical framework for understanding school-university partnerships that are anchored in the values of reciprocity and equity. This framework is informed by an emerging body of literature addressing the national movement toward engagement in higher education. Literature on engagement is often viewed through multiple contexts (urban renewal, community development, etc.) of which schools are just one piece of the puzzle. As such, some distinctions must be made between university-community partnerships and university-school partnerships discussed in this article. Overall, I suggest that university-school partnerships are high stakes due to the growing scrutiny of teacher education programs. The expectation that Colleges of Education will play an active role in supporting local schools is fueled by accrediting agencies, school districts, legislators, and other influential constituents who are fully invested in improving student outcomes. For this reason, these partnerships often have clear goals (e.g., improve test scores) and rely on a predictable group of partners to achieve these goals-teachers, parents, school administrators, university faculty and staff.

Alternatively, university-community partnerships may feature multiple and sometimes competing goals. These partnerships often draw on the perspectives of numerous constituents with unique interests in addressing a community problem. For example, a university-community partnership focusing on improving the health of freshwater lakes may involve partners from the commercial fishing industry, environmental organizations, manufacturing plants, and recreation enthusiasts. Given the diverse interests and power relationships among these stakeholders, goals for these partnerships may be less clear and evolve over the life of the partnership.

Despite these differences, there are some similarities between university-community and university-school partnerships. A common element is that university partners often assume the role of experts who transmit their knowledge to external partners for the purpose of improving policies or practices. In this context, community and school partners often participate as consumers of knowledge and adopt innovations generated

by university faculty and staff. I will discuss this traditional conceptualization of outreach and public service in more detail later.

Recognizing the scope of this special issue of *Metropolitan Universities*, my article limits the discussion of engagement to university and school partnerships. As previously stated, my examination is further limited to the context of umbrella arrangements where school and university partners collaborate around a shared agenda to improve teaching and learning (Ravid and Handler 2001). These partners include teachers and school administrators and a broad set of university faculty and academic staff members involved with the initiative. This view of engagement recognizes that a number of college and university actors are engaged in umbrella arrangements with schools, not just College of Education faculty. For example, research on schools is increasingly interdisciplinary, drawing on scholars from other fields to improve child development and learning. In addition, academic staff and outreach staff play important roles in facilitating this work and thus interact heavily with school partners at all levels.

Second, within the parameters outlined above, I examine a single case study of a school-university partnership to illustrate engagement barriers and factors promoting engagement between universities and schools. Third, I provide practical suggestions for creating school-university partnerships embedded in the values of engagement.

School-University Partnerships and the Public Engagement Movement

The well publicized criticisms of education that sprang up in the 1980s were not unique to K-12 education. Colleges and universities also faced growing public disapproval during this period. Once viewed as the answer to poverty, racism, and other social ills, higher education came to be viewed as wasteful and overpriced and failing to deliver on its promises (St. John and Parsons 2004). Responding to these national concerns, higher education has undergone a renaissance to revive the civic missions of its public colleges and universities. As such, numerous higher education professional organizations have launched initiatives to connect institutions in more meaningful ways with the communities they serve (Sandmann and Weerts 2006).

During this period of civic revival, the term "engagement" has emerged to describe a new kind of relationship between higher education institutions and communities. Engagement emphasizes a two-way relationship with community partners focused on sharing knowledge and joint problem-solving for mutual benefit (Boyer 1996; Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land Grant Universities 1999). This broad definition differs from traditional conceptualizations of public service and outreach that emphasize a one-way approach to delivering knowledge and service to the public. In short, the new philosophy calls for a shift away from an expert model of delivering university knowledge to the public, toward a more collaborative model where

community partners play a significant role in creating and sharing knowledge to the mutual benefit of institutions and society.

Despite the growing momentum for engagement, the rhetoric surrounding it has been more impressive than its actual practice. In other words, many institutions say that they are "doing engagement" but in reality, there is "more smoke than fire" (American Association of State Colleges and Universities 2002, 13). Practicing engagement presents many challenges for universities and community partnerships. For example, developing mutually beneficial school-university partnerships has been compared to dancing in the dark in which collaborators focus on tasks and outcomes without examining their dance steps-elements of partnerships that enhance the success of these initiatives (Borthwick 2001). Overall, university-school partnerships often begin with high expectations but have limited capacity to fulfill these expectations (Baum 2000).

In general, struggles in school-university partnerships are often rooted in structural and cultural factors precluding the formation of reciprocal relationships between the two groups. In the next section, I present a theoretical framework to unpack the concept of engagement in the context of school-university partnerships. I follow this discussion with an examination of challenges and opportunities for university engagement with schools.

School-University Engagement Framework

The school-university engagement framework presented in this article stems from theories of knowledge utilization and dissemination. Knowledge utilization examines the transfer of knowledge within and across settings with the assumption that knowledge will result in learning, exchange of information or perspectives, acquisition of new perspectives and attitudes, or increased ability to make informed choices among alternatives (Hutchinson and Huberman 1993). In this article, I examine two different models of knowledge transfer within the context of school-university partnerships. First, I articulate elements of the linear, uni-directional model of knowledge flow (one-way approach). Upon discussing the limitations of this approach, I outline the constructivist, engagement model of knowledge flow (two-way approach) and its application to university engagement with schools.

The widely accepted model of knowledge flow before the 1970s was linear and uni-directional. In this model, knowledge itself is viewed from an objectivist epistemology emphasizing logical thinking rather than understandings. Furthermore, knowledge is viewed as value neutral, detached, and as a commodity that can be transferred from a knowledge producer to a user (National Center for the Dissemination of Disability Research 1996). In this model, knowledge dissemination flows in one direction and is shared through the modes of spread or choice (Hutchinson and Huberman 1993). Spread refers to a one-way broadcasting of knowledge from researcher (university faculty member) to user (teacher/student) without regard to acceptance of the knowledge. Choice involves producing alternatives for users to compare strategies for implementation. In both strategies, boundary spanners play a role in delivering knowledge from producer to user. For example, in the case of school-university

partnerships, the uni-directional approach resembles a consulting relationship as explained by Ravid and Handler (2001). In this context, university faculty members independently develop new knowledge and pass along their findings for school partners to apply in the classroom. Based on their own educational research (detached examination of school practices), university faculty members may provide recommendations for best practice that school partners may choose to adopt. The notion of university faculty member as expert is reinforced, and school partners assume roles as consumers of knowledge and innovation.

During the mid-1970s, theorists began to adopt a more inclusive, two-way approach to knowledge flow. This model emerged because the linear model was increasingly shown to be ineffective since it failed to take into account the motivations and contexts of intended recipients (Berman and McLaughlin 1978). In school settings, for example, researchers learned that top down programs were ineffective in institutionalizing ideas into the classroom curriculum. Their analysis led them to reject the assumption that one can simply pass on information to a set of users and expect that learning will result (Hutchinson and Huberman 1993).

Uni-directional and multi-directional theories of knowledge flow can be illustrated by examining differences between research in partner schools and laboratory schools. Osguthorpe and others (1995) explain,

> Instead of university professors doing research *on* students and *on* teachers, everyone connected with the partner school works together to design the studies, gather the data, and analyze the results. And as teachers and students come to view themselves as full-fledged contributors to the research process, they not only change the way research is conducted in their partner schools, they change the way learning and teaching are performed. (p. 267)

As this quote illustrates, knowledge creation in partner schools reflects an epistemological shift from a rational or objectivist worldview to a constructivist worldview (Hutchinson and Huberman 1993). Constructivism suggests that knowledge process is local, complex, and dynamic, and that learning takes place within a context where knowledge is applied (Hood 2002). In the context of school-university partnerships, Clift and others (1995) suggest that constructivism focuses on "helping practitioners describe their understandings and developing habits of inquiry into other interpretations. Improvement of practice depends on being open to perceiving issues and problems, and then acting in ways that will transform, clarify, and resolve issues and problems" (p. 5). Under these ways of knowing, the one-way dissemination strategies of spread and choice are replaced by two-way interactive strategies of exchange and implementation (Hutchinson and Huberman 1993).

The ideas in this framework present the foundational concepts for understanding engagement in the context of school-university partnerships. In sum, proponents of engagement embrace a constructivist worldview and develop structures and cultures to support this two-way philosophy. Table 1 provides an illustration of this theoretical framework as it informs our understanding of school-university engagement.

Table 1: School-university engagement and models of knowledge flow

	Linear, uni-directional model (one-way approach)	**Constructivist, engagement model (two-way approach)**
Epistemology	Positivist: knowledge is value neutral, detached and "exists on its own." Logical, rational perspective.	Constructivist: knowledge is developmental, internally constructed, and socially and culturally mediated by partners (university researchers, teachers, parents, school administrators, etc).
Role of higher education institution and schools	University produces knowledge through traditional research methodology (labs, controlled experiments, etc). Roles and functions of labor, evaluation, dissemination, planning separated from researcher and school partners. School partners have little input into the research design.	Learning takes place within context in which knowledge is applied (school setting). Knowledge process is local, complex, and dynamic and lies outside the boundaries of the institution. Knowledge is embedded in a group of learners (teachers, parents, administrators, university faculty).
Boundary-spanning roles	Field agents (university faculty and staff) deliver and interpret knowledge to be used by school partners.	Field agents (university faculty and staff) interact with school partners at all stages: planning, design, analysis, implementation
Dissemination philosophy and strategies (Hutchinson and Huberman 1993)	**Dissemination paradigm** *Spread:* One-way broadcast of new knowledge from university to school partners *Choice:* University researchers produce alternatives for teachers to choose	**Systemic change paradigm** *Exchange:* Institutions and school partners exchange perspectives, materials, resources *Implementation:* Interactive process of institutionalizing ideas

Barriers to Adopting a Two-way Flow of Knowledge

Researchers of knowledge utilization and school-university partnerships have identified similar themes associated with barriers or facilitators to promote a two-way flow of knowledge. However, the intensity and type of barriers may vary significantly by institutional type. For example, at major research universities, "researcher as his or her own culture" is consistently rewarded by the academy, and as a result, researchers tend to align themselves with particular sources of revenue, disciplines, professions, or scholarly societies (Hood 2002). Traditional views of academic work at major research

institutions may result in restrictive definitions of research and promotion that inhibit community-based work (Dickson et al. 1985).

Given the emphasis on scholarship at major research universities, faculty at these institutions may be more concerned than their teaching university colleagues about the theoretical underpinnings of the educational process and how research contributes to an understanding of it (Trubowitz and Longo 1997). This orientation toward scholarship may be at odds with addressing real life problems of schools. As a result of these socialization patterns, research university faculty may be less likely than teaching university faculty to initiate collaborative partnerships with schools. This assertion is supported by Holland's (2005) work suggesting that engagement is more likely to be present at institutions that emphasize teaching and learning more than research.

Overall, schools and university cultures have important differences which can lead to an avoidance of a relationship between the two entities (Gomez et al. 1992). For example, schools and higher education institutions vary drastically in reward systems, pedagogy, administrative procedures and style, control, and policy making (Gomez et al. 1992). In addition, fund expenditures differ between universities and schools. For example, schools typically focus on programmatic issues and delivering educational services to their students in the most efficient and effective manner (Trubowitz and Longo 1997). Alternatively, colleges and universities possess multiple and competing missions that often result in efficiency becoming a secondary goal.

Cultural differences between schools and universities may become most obvious when observing interpersonal relationships between teachers and university faculty. For example, interpersonal conflicts between groups may be attributed to power struggles, lack of shared vision, ambiguity of roles, inconsistent communication, conflicts in scheduling, and lack of recognition, support, and agreement on division of labor. Successful engagement efforts depend on the ability of partners to treat each other with respect (Handler and Ravid 2001).

Factors Promoting a Two-way Flow of Knowledge

The previous section pointed out that cultural barriers often preclude two-way interactions between schools and universities. However, in some cases, institutional culture and mission may promote engagement with schools and community partners. As discussed earlier, university faculty who are most likely to adopt an engagement agenda typically work in institutions that emphasize teaching and learning more than research, enroll large numbers of local students, and are placed in economic hubs with significant regional challenges and opportunities (Holland 2005). These institutions become safe places to conduct intensive university-external collaborations since many of these campuses deliberately brand engagement and support school-university partnerships as a symbol of an institution's identity (Weerts and Sandmann 2006).

Just as interpersonal relationships are critical to understanding barriers to engagement, they are essential to understanding how two-way flows of knowledge are facilitated.

Successful partnerships feature rich interpersonal exchanges, support, and sustained face-to-face contact over long periods of time (Hutchinson and Huberman 1993). In general, there is a wealth of university-community engagement literature suggesting that trust and sustained relationships among institutions and community partners are essential to building effective community partnerships (Bringle and Hatcher 2000; Maurrasse 2001; Votruba 1996; Walshok 1999; Ward 1996; Zlotkowski, 1998).

The school-university partnership literature is also replete with examples of how interpersonal relationships between partners foster reciprocal relationships been universities and schools. Key characteristics of boundary spanners that facilitate a two-way flow of knowledge include enthusiasm for learning, shared goals and commitment, integrity, interpersonal skills, effective communication, and creativity (Vozzo and Bober 2001). In addition, effective spanners are committed to lifelong learning, accept different perspectives, think creatively, value trust, safety, honesty, and open communication (Sinclair and Perre 2001). Overall, effective university boundary spanners respect practitioners as equal partners and are willing to compromise and be flexible (Handler and Ravid 2001).

Moving toward a two-way flow of knowledge between university and school partners requires establishment of equitable governance practices. Successful governance requires mutual self interest and common goals, shared decision making, clear focus, a manageable agenda, commitment from top leadership, fiscal support, long term commitment, and information sharing (Gomez et al. 1992). Most important, these partnerships must develop out of mutual benefit. Trubowitz and Longo (1997) explain the importance of this step in their reflections about one school-university partnership. "It was clear to us from the beginning that the collaboration would be short lived if both parties involved did not find that at least some of their central needs were served. What we tried to avoid was a lopsided view of the cooperative process in which one institution was providing resources to help the other without a clear sense of the benefits it was receiving" (p. 60).

Finally, leadership is a key variable that may enhance the ability of partners to move toward engagement. Many (Maurrasse 2001; Votruba 1996; Walshok 1999; Ward 1996; Zlotkowski 1998) have identified leadership as a key factor promoting university commitment to engagement. For example, presidential leaders are critical to legitimizing service activities (Ward 1996) and the intellectual and political support of charismatic leaders is important to sustaining institutional commitment to service (Walshok 1999). In addition, effective leaders create accessible and adaptable structures to provide partners with maximum opportunity to access knowledge resources (Hutchinson and Huberman 1993).

To summarize, colleges and university leaders face a variety of obstacles when attempting to build a two-way flow of knowledge with school partners. Specifically, universities and schools each possess unique cultures, reward systems, pedagogy, administrative procedures, policy making, and expenditures that divide the two entities and inhibit engagement. On the other hand, engagement is facilitated, in part, by

higher education leaders that play important roles in legitimizing engagement with schools (via rewards, branding, etc.). In addition, a two-way flow of knowledge is facilitated through the presence of talented boundary spanners (typically university staff, not faculty) who have the ability to create equitable governance structures and reciprocal relationships between partners.

School-University Engagement at Southern State University

In this section, I examine the concept of engagement through a single case study of a school-university partnership referred to in this article as the Jackson County School District (JCSD)-Southern State University (SSU)-Ellisville Community (EC) Partnership for Community Learning. I utilize a case study to articulate successes and struggles as universities strive to become more engaged with schools.

While this examination primarily focuses on SSU's relationship with the school district, this case is unique in that it also highlights perspectives of community members involved in the partnership. While limited voice is given to these partners in this article, it is important to note that this case is placed in a larger framework regarding institutional barriers and enablers of university-community engagement. I have extracted this case from a large qualitative data set representing institutional and community perspectives from twelve separate university-community partnerships. These cases comprise a larger study considering institutional level strategies to promote community engagement at land grant and urban research universities.

Pseudonyms are used to maintain the confidentiality of institutions and partners. Data was collected in 2004 through confidential interviews and documents retrieved at each case study site. I was guided by coding and analysis procedures outlined in Bogdan and Bicklen (1992). (Sections of this case study appear in a revised form in Vol. 10, No. 3 of the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, Institute of Higher Education and the Office of the Vice President for Public Service and Outreach, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, www.uga.edu/jheoe).

Background

Southern State University (SSU) is a large land grant university located in a small, rural southern community. It boasts a century long commitment to service and outreach to the state. In the 1970s, a public service career ladder was created to promote a group of outreach faculty through a parallel track similar to the traditional tenure track model. Through this career track, SSU outreach faculty and staff are employed in over 150 counties to address community-based problems. The university is considered to be at the forefront of the engagement movement, as SSU faculty and staff hold important leadership positions in national public engagement efforts.

In the region surrounding SSU, school achievement gaps vary drastically by race and class. In 2000, two local schools in Ellisville-Jackson County (EJC) were listed in an

at-risk warning category by the state, indicating that the state would soon take over the school if test scores did not improve. Within this context, a new superintendent of EJC schools and new dean of the SSU College of Education arrived in Ellisville. SSU interviewees explained that the two leaders met and discussed the fact that SSU and EJC never had a formal partnership to address issues related to school improvement. Both agreed that SSU's nationally recognized School of Education could play an important role in helping struggling schools in Ellisville.

The result of their conversation was a press conference to unveil an initial five-year partnership designed to establish at-risk schools as Community Learning Centers. These Centers feature after-school programs and other services including enrichment activities, homework assistance, and library and technology access for students and their families. My analysis of founding documents suggests that this partnership is built on the philosophy that school, community, and university partners share responsibility for improving student outcomes. The partnership espouses a two-way (engagement) relationship where knowledge and resources are exchanged to benefit all stakeholders invested in the partnership.

In pursuit of engagement at SSU: Institutional level perspectives

My analysis of this case suggests that SSU's history as a land grant institution is both a blessing and a curse in its efforts to adopt a two-way flow of knowledge with community schools. On one hand, the institution has a well established public service mission and operates large centers with substantial budgets to address issues of public concern. During my interviews, it became clear that the university enjoys a strong reputation and brings sizable intellectual and fiscal resources to bear on state needs. On the other hand, it was also clear that the land grant tradition at SSU reinforces a one-way model of knowledge dissemination. At land grant institutions, agricultural or cooperative extension historically operated as a one-way process of university researchers sharing new agricultural technologies to be used by farmers. In this model, extension field agents translate research findings into terms understandable by farmers and convince them to use the new knowledge (Mundy 1992).

Due in part to its strong land grant heritage, the concept of engagement is still emerging at SSU. In general, the word "service" is a fuzzy concept that may be interpreted in a number of ways at SSU. For example, one academic vice president explained that many SSU faculty view public service as service to the profession. Their overall view is that knowledge is produced within academic disciplines and is eventually available for consumption by the public.

This case analysis illustrates the limitations of making blanket statements about attributes of engaged institutions like SSU. For example, in loosely coupled organizations (Birnbaum 1988; Weick 1976), groups of campus actors may forge two-way relationships with communities independent of campus executives' knowledge and support. Depending on their background or experience, these groups of actors may be more tightly coupled with community agencies than the dominant academic culture.

As such, aspects of the institution may actually be engaged without the institution taking formal steps toward engagement. However, institutions may take strategic and symbolic steps toward engagement while a collection of campus units remain disengaged. This occurs because a core group of institutional actors-typically faculty-are more tightly coupled with academic norms and rewards than community concerns.

The challenge of institutionalizing engagement in a loosely coupled organization was especially evident in the JCSD-SSU-EC Partnership for Community Learning. Authentic notions of engagement are present among pockets of SSU faculty and staff who value two-way flow of knowledge with community partners. However, the disconnect between rhetoric and reality among the university as a whole did not go unnoticed among community partners. For example, some community interviewees described the school initiative as a special exception that is not widespread or institutionalized across the university. One interviewee explained, "This particular partnership has been strong, but SSU as a whole is not engaged with the community. People on campus are not aware of the poor people who live in Ellisville because they don't get out the door."

SSU leaders employed symbolic actions to facilitate and legitimize the two-way partnership with school partners in Ellisville. For example, a press release deemed the partnership as a first attempt to engage with the school district although many other programs were already in progress in the district. One SSU staff member connected to the program commented, "It was ironic that we actually had over 350 school initiatives underway in the community at the time, but that it was not recognized as being a partnership. The formality of the dean and superintendent sealed the program as a legitimate community program." Images and stories about the partnership were created to communicate its values to internal and external agencies. Over eighty-five local newspaper articles have been written about the initiative.

Symbolic notions about the engaged nature of the partnership were evident in language used by SSU leaders. For example, one campus interviewee connected with the partnership explained that SSU is careful to always list the community and school partners first when describing the partnership. According to this interviewee, SSU is to be viewed as operating in the background. Attention to this ordering reinforces the idea that SSU is not in charge of the partnership, but one of many agencies equally committed to school improvement. Speeches to community groups, Web sites, and printed materials reflect SSU's espoused image as an equal partner that values the leadership, knowledge, and perspectives of groups outside the university.

In addition to their symbolic leadership roles, SSU leaders play important operational roles in facilitating a two-way flow of knowledge with schools. SSU leaders hired one and a half staff members to support the partnership and secure grants to bolster the program. According to interviewees, the Dean's leadership has had an impact on institutionalizing the College of Education's approach to engagement. "They [faculty] always said that they did public service but it was really that they got a grant and were looking for guinea pigs to test. It took the Dean's level leadership to change the culture."

Partnership Level Perspectives of Engagement

While institutional-level perspectives are important to understanding leadership and infrastructure for engagement, this case study suggests that a two-way flow of knowledge is best understood at the partnership level. Specifically, governance and interpersonal relationships characterizing the everyday functioning of the partnership is critical to understanding engagement barriers and factors promoting engagement.

An important theme emerging at the EJC-SSU-EC partnership is the delicate nature of creating and governing partnership relationships. The initiative started with the superintendent and dean assigning key staff people to lead the partnership design team, including SSU faculty, school district staff, and elementary school principals. The team solicited participation from visible community members including parents, non-profit leaders and prominent community members. The thirty-six-member design team developed a vision and initiated action teams to take on specific tasks related to improving schools including revising calendar/year requirements, improving community and parent involvement, and enhancing teacher preparation. Two pilot schools were selected as test sites for the new initiatives. SSU interviewees declared that the university made a deliberate effort not to make any decisions without community in order to be consistent with the values of engagement.

SSU's strategy to facilitate a two-way partnership with the schools has received mostly high marks with community and school partners. One community partner explained, "Those involved with the partnership went to great lengths to ensure that the goals for the project were shared goals. The university was not pushing its own goals for us-the school district had to determine its own vision. There was a feeling of mutual respect, a sense of finding a shared vision...educating kids...a goal that everyone could hop on."

However, this praise was not consistent in all areas. Interviewees explained that the decision to start two pilot schools was made by SSU and the school district without consulting the design team, causing some community members to become frustrated and angry. Due to this oversight by partnership leaders, a feeling of mutual respect has waxed and waned among some groups of constituents. The most significant tension was with teachers at the local pilot schools who felt threatened by the partnership. One local teacher explained, "Initially teachers were upset because they didn't have a choice about the new program...the Dean and the Superintendent just decided on it. Teachers felt that they didn't have input on the front end and that created emotional backlash."

Despite these problems, SSU's work in creating a two-way dialogue with community partners and teachers has been generally well received. This is mostly attributed to SSU boundary-spanners, "Jane" and "Joan," academic staff members charged with managing the program. One interviewee summed up the community perspective: "Jane and Joan are making things happen. I look to them for support. If they were gone there would be a significant loss in momentum. Their personal style and excitement for this work are evident in their trips to the school and personal support for my work." Said another, "Jane and Joan believe that everyone is an expert. And they don't take any

credit, we feel like we really did it." Community partners talked about Jane and Joan as "inspiring success" among constituencies to meet partnership objectives.

SSU faculty involvement with the partnership has evolved slowly. Catalysts for faculty involvement have been the Dean's support, potential for grants, and the extent to which students can do hands-on work through practica, curriculum development, and dissertation research. In all cases, faculty involved with the partnership are expected to produce strong scholarship. Jane and Joan play a role in helping faculty develop community-based scholarship embedded in the values of engagement. According to campus interviewees, the idea of engaged scholarship is slowly becoming more valued on tenure committees.

SSU's ability to facilitate a mutually beneficial relationship with EJC-SSU-EC partners is contingent on the effectiveness of boundary-spanners, Jane and Joan. Despite their critical roles, a review of SSU historical documents revealed that traditional academics at SSU often view these staff members as second class citizens. The lead SSU staff person for the EJC-SSU-EC partnership, Jane, is an academic professional-not a traditional faculty member-who admits that "this kind of work won't get anyone tenure." Despite these views, boundary-spanners are shown to be critical to building a productive working relationship with community partners. They are credited with humanizing the university to community and school partners and producing a forum for a two-way flow of knowledge to take place. One community interviewee articulated the importance of this role, "The trick is for the university not to hold themselves above the community, instead to be very attentive to the partners and school district...Lots of people have never been to campus and SSU may as well be Mars to them. We need to de-mystify what the university is all about."

Conclusions

There are a number of lessons to be learned from the SSU case study. In this section, I suggest that factors that promote and inhibit university-school engagement can be understood more clearly at two levels: the institutional level and the partnership level. These levels and corresponding engagement variables are illustrated in Table 2.

At the institutional level, my examination of SSU suggests that mission and history can be both a blessing and a curse as engagement leaders try to lead the institution to embrace a two-way flow of knowledge with school partners. SSU's blessing as a land grant institution is that it enjoys a strong reputation for supporting the state and has ample resources devoted to public service and outreach. However, the curse is that the orientation to this service is deeply embedded in a unidirectional flow of knowledge. Widespread adoption of a two-way flow of knowledge by faculty and staff is inhibited due to the size, complexity, and loosely coupled nature of the organization.

Despite these barriers, two factors at the institutional level served to facilitate SSU's engagement with schools in Ellisville. First, SSU leadership was very important both symbolically and operationally. At the symbolic level, campus leaders promoted

engagement through speeches, events, media events, and intentional two-way language embodying the values of the partnership. At the operational level, campus leaders provided support through budget and staff to make engagement work with school partners.

Second, SSU's engagement with the school was facilitated by recasting traditional academic work in the context of the partnership. For example, university engagement with schools was framed among traditional faculty as a way to generate research grants, develop student practicum experiences, enhance curriculum, and launch dissertation projects. In other words, engagement is facilitated when university faculty view it as reinforcing traditional academic norms. At the same time, this begs the question of whether traditional faculty outreach is just being repackaged and labeled as engagement. More investigation is necessary to determine whether faculty are actually practicing the concepts of engagement or merely reframing their work in this light.

As Table 2 illustrates, engagement barriers and enablers can also be viewed at the partnership level. My case study of SSU reinforced the importance of developing equitable governance structures to encourage multidirectional flows of knowledge between university and school partners. SSU's attention to creating a broad representation of partners in the design team paid dividends in school partners perceptions of the institution as a team player. At the same time, the case study illustrated the delicate nature of establishing these partnerships and the importance of consulting school partners in all phases of the project. The decision by SSU and district leaders to launch pilot schools without consultation from local teachers damaged SSU's efforts to cast itself as a partner that values reciprocity. In short, attention to governance and power relationships matters at all stages.

Finally, this study reinforces the importance of boundary spanners in facilitating university engagement with schools. My examination of SSU suggests that knowledge flow is ultimately in the hands of boundary spanners (typically academic staff) who create ground level conditions to facilitate exchange between university and school partners. At SSU, Jane and Joan successfully dissolved power and status differences present among partners and created venues for building trust, respect, and exchange for mutual benefit. These spanners reflected a service ethic and put the needs of the schools and their students before the institution.

Table 2: Southern State University- School Engagement Barriers and Enablers

		Barriers	Enablers
Institutional level	History and mission	Cooperative extension history (one-way model) embedded in culture	Large public service budget, established reputation of service to the state
	Epistemology	Two-way concept of engagement not shared or understood throughout organization	Engagement language intentional among campus leaders of outreach
	Organizational structures and rewards	Complexity, size, loosely coupled organization inhibits shared understanding of engagement Engagement activity not widely recognized in faculty promotion and tenure	Potential for faculty research grants, student practicum experiences, curriculum development, and dissertation research
	Leadership		Symbolic support: speeches, events, media appearances, language. Operational support: budget, staff hires
Partnership level	Governance	Pilot school initiative launched without consultation from local teachers and design team.	Establishment of diverse design team to create shared vision, goals for the partnership (school, university, community partners)
	Boundary-spanning roles		SSU outreach staff viewed as good listeners who "inspire success," and model a service ethic Two-way orientation of knowledge flow is intentional among boundary-spanners

Implications for practice at metropolitan universities

What are the implications of this study for metropolitan institutions as they seek to build two-way relationships with schools? First, this study reinforces the importance of institutional history, mission, organizational structure, and rewards on the capacity and inclination of university faculty and staff to take on engagement with schools. While SSU benefited from its reputation and large public service budgets, the two-way flow of knowledge with external partners is not widely understood or rewarded due to its historical orientation toward service, size, complexity, and emphasis on traditional research.

This finding yields both good and bad news for metropolitan universities. The good news is that leaders of metropolitan universities might be free from the institutional baggage faced by land grant leaders when seeking to build authentic two-way relationships between university and school partners. Many metropolitan universities are younger than their land grant counterparts, have teaching missions, and are less entrenched in traditional research culture. In addition, they are typically smaller and tightly coupled with student needs rather than scholarly societies. For these reasons, it may be easier for faculty and staff at metropolitan universities to take on engagement and develop an authentic two-way partnership with school partners.

Leaders of metropolitan universities might take advantage of their institutions' more favorable organizational characteristics to advance engagement as the defining practice of outreach with schools. Developing a culture of engagement with schools is possible when leaders make deliberate gestures to support it both symbolically and operationally through strategic planning, formal and informal communications, budget support, staffing, and rewards. Portland State University, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) are examples of institutions whose leaders have successfully advanced engagement as an organizing principle for teaching, learning, and research. Overall, leadership is critical in facilitating university engagement with schools in any institutional context.

The bad news for metropolitan universities, however, is that such institutions typically have fewer resources than their land grant counterparts to conduct engagement activities. University faculty and staff at metropolitan universities may not have the financial capacity to successfully create authentic two-way relationships with their schools. One suggestion is to leverage the idea of engagement to attract new and untapped sources of revenue. For example, "Transforming Schools through University Engagement" might become the headline for a capital campaign aimed to improve student learning in the metro region. Instead of raising money for traditional faculty research on schools (one-way research paradigm, e.g., endow a professorship) the campaign may attract broader support from granting agencies, donors, and other private investors if multiple partners (i.e., schools, universities) are viewed as working together to address a community need. Re-orienting university advancement to think in this collaborative way may be easier at metropolitan universities than land grant institutions due to the cultural and organizational issues outlined above.

Finally, this study has critical implications for improving practice at the partnership level. This study suggests that boundary-spanners are the key to facilitating a two-way flow of knowledge between university and school partners. The absence of spanners with a service ethic who know how to work effectively with school partners can greatly undermine the engagement relationship. For this reason, it is important to have proper training for university faculty and staff who seek to take on engagement in schools. An "Engagement Academy," similar to many campus teaching academies, might be developed to familiarize faculty and staff with the values of engagement and provide training for entering and managing two-way relationships with schools. Issues of governance, research design, fund development and other topics could be covered in this academy. Virginia Tech is currently developing such an academy more broadly aimed at facilitating engagement with community partners.

In summary, this article suggests that there are obstacles, but also tremendous opportunities for metropolitan universities to enter into two-way partnerships with schools. However, a final set of challenging questions must be posed: In the end, what are the outcomes of these partnerships? To what extent are these partnerships improving the lives of the children and families they aim to serve? What evidence do we have that these efforts-requiring great time and energy-are worth the cost? Addressing these questions requires university and school partners to consider that such partnerships are not ends, but means to transforming communities they serve. Such an orientation must guide future practice and research on university-school partnerships.

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