"Rekindle and Recapture the Love": Establishing System-wide Indicators of Progress in Community Engagement and Economic Development

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In May 2012, University of North Carolina (UNC) President Tom Ross simultaneously commissioned two task forces to develop indicators that all UNC campuses could use to measure "progress in community engagement and economic development." The charge to the Community Engagement Task Force and the Economic Development Task Force was to develop metrics that were both meaningful as a demonstration of the impact of the UNC system on the State of North Carolina and practical to collect given the limited fiscal and personnel resources available to campuses. The separate, multi-campus task forces ultimately produced one combined Report to draw attention to the interconnections between community engagement and economic development, as well as to create data collection and reporting efficiencies. This article shares the trial process through which six criteria for selecting metrics and measures were established, as well as discusses challenges and opportunities of developing system-wide metrics on community engagement and economic development. Analysis of this collective effort within the UNC system may inform future efforts to identify and implement institution- or system-wide measures and metrics that capture indicators of progress in community engagement and economic development.

The short appointment letter that came to each of the 16 campuses from the University of North Carolina system's president, Tom Ross, set into motion concrete efforts to tell a fully compelling and true story: how the University of North Carolina state system significantly contributes to the health and vibrancy of the State. Earlier that summer, President Ross spoke passionately at the opening of the second annual UNC Engagement Summit, a day-long meeting of the campuses convened by Leslie Boney, the UNC vice chancellor for international, community, and economic engagement and organized by a handful of civic engagement administrators (including the author), about the inextricable links between the health of the university system and that of the State. At the Summit, President Ross shared his strategic priorities for 2012, which included the imperative to "unleash our faculty's brainpower in more strategic, targeted fashion" and the specific goal to "finalize metrics to assess progress in community engagement and economic development work" (Ross, 2012a, p. 4). He declared to the audience of higher education leaders, including community engagement, outreach, and economic development administrators that "(t)he universities of North Carolina must become more directly engaged with the people of North Carolina and the State as whole." And, further, that "one of our (university) foci must be to rekindle and recapture state citizens' love of North Carolina universities. There are lots of people in the State now who did not grow up with these connections…(and) we must bring the connection with our universities to these people" (Ross, 2012b).

The question of how to "rekindle and recapture the love" was a critical question tied directly to the fiscal future of the university system. The economic and political climate in North Carolina and other States since the 2008 economic recession has caused a number of state legislature representatives, and the public more broadly, to question what economists call "returns on investment" from higher education appropriations. In other words, how have the citizens of North Carolina benefited as a result of the State dollars directed to the State system of higher education? The challenge to value public investment in North Carolina's state public university system, the oldest and one of the best funded systems in the United States, was especially pressing as the system had experienced significant and sustained cuts (9.7 percent below pre-recession levels) since the recession (Mitchell, 2013). In his appointment letters, Ross charged the Task Forces to "identify (annual) system-wide engagement metrics, so that by the end of this calendar year we can have consensus on what to count and a strategy on how to count them" (T. Ross, personal communication, May 30, 2012c).

The Process

Each of the two separate Task Forces was chaired by an individual at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG): The director of the Institute for Community and Economic Engagement (the author) served as chair of the Community Engagement Metrics Task Force and the associate vice chancellor for economic development served as chair of the Economic Development Task Force. The early decision to appoint chairs from the same institution was intended to allow the Task Forces to establish parallel time frames as well as common strategies and mechanisms to collect and report data across the system's institutions.

Within the first two months of the trial phase, however, the two Task Forces and ensuing reports were merged as members agreed that both community engagement and economic development fall along a spectrum of ways UNC institutions serve the citizens of North Carolina, and, further, that some activities can be enacted through community engagement partnerships for economic development purposes. It was reasoned that the two approaches often serve parallel and sometimes synergizing processes in the universities' collective efforts to create healthy, safe, and vibrant communities – and so, they both reflect the systems' contributions to the public. The importance of higher education institutions as community and economic "anchors" or "stewards of place" is a position also advanced by the American Association for State Colleges and Universities (2002) and Campus Compact (Wittman & Crews, 2012). Thus, the two Task Forces were combined and are referred to herein as the Task Force.

The UNC system includes a variety of types of educational institutions across the 16 members, including a college of the arts, a land grant institution, a "flagship" university, regional-serving rural and urban campuses, two historically Black colleges, an historically Tribal college, and even a high school for science and math. Ten of the 15 UNC system universities had received the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's elective classification for community engagement by 2010, and several more had applied for the designation effective in 2015. Given the differences in missions, priorities, and capacities across the 16 institutions, the priority to identify data that were both meaningful and feasible for all campuses to commonly collect was especially challenging.

Some of the most critical conversations throughout the trial phase centered on how significant the data would need to be to offset the costly investments required to generate, collect, and disseminate the data. Campuses had to invest not only personnel hours and in some cases funds to purchase survey systems to collect the data centrally, but also political capital in asking faculty and staff members to provide detailed data that may not have been collected previously. In the trial phase, campus representatives were asked to put forth best efforts to provide the data, and in the cases in which data collection was not feasible, to offer critical feedback to inform the final recommendations of the Task Force. Thus, members of the Task Force frequently referred to the metaphor introduced by Boney in early conversations about the scope of the Task Force, "Is the juice worth the squeeze" (L. Boney, personal communication, September 3, 2012)? Did the value of the data ("the juice") – as compelling illustrations of the UNC story of its engagement with and contributions to North Carolina communities – outweigh the costs associated with obtaining the data ("the squeeze")?

The Task Force chose the trial metrics through a five month-long and somewhat circuitous process as discussions bounced back and forth between what was meaningful data to collect and what was actually feasible given the paucity of existing data as well as mechanisms to tell institution level engagement stories let alone system level impact stories. Key conversations and efforts during this time focused on what data and mechanisms currently existed, as well as identifying the key audiences and their motivations and likely responses to and uses of the data; the challenges and risks associated with collecting, aggregating, and sharing data; synthesizing existing efforts elsewhere to collect and measure community engagement and economic development data nationally and internationally; exploring the existing data and staff capacities each campus would have to dedicate to data collection during the trial phase and annually thereafter; and, finally, narrowing the metrics and measures for campuses to report while also ensuring that the items were appropriately inclusive to tell a compelling and comprehensive, if not fully complete, story.

Two important results of these conversations that effectively guided and served the Task Forces work were to (a) develop *criteria* that served as a litmus test for whether proposed metric areas and more specific measures should be considered for inclusion in the trial phase, and (b) identify the need for a *trial phase*. This article shares the rationale for choosing the six criteria established for selecting metric areas, provides a brief description of the final metric areas and measures chosen as a result of the trial phase, and describes key lessons learned during the trial phase. Analysis of this collective effort within the UNC system may inform others' efforts to identify and implement institution- or system-wide measures and metrics related to community engagement and economic development activities and outcomes.

Criteria for Metric Areas and Measures

Establishing criteria for inclusion as metrics areas to be collected and reported annually to the UNC

General Administration (GA) served several important purposes. First, criteria helped to focus the work of the Task Force toward specific aims. Similar to an institutional mission or vision statement, the criteria helped to articulate values and refine purposes as guideposts for those shaping the metric areas and measures. Second, establishing the criteria would help guide persons who did not participate in the Task Force but who would be responsible for implementing the data collection requests in the future. The criteria clarify why, among all possible metrics, six emerged as most worthy of collection.

Additionally, criteria can help stakeholders outside of the university (e.g., board of governors, media, citizen taxpayers, and voters) understand the values and purposes guiding the development of the metrics. Thus, the criteria were intended to serve as educational tools to explain the Task Force and University system's rationale for collecting and disseminating the data. Therefore, each metric was expected to satisfy all of the six criteria outlined below.

Criterion 1: Reflects Contributions of Key Constituent Groups

The first criterion speaks to two requirements. First, that the data serve as *indicators*, and second, that those indicators describe key *constituent groups* within the university.

One of the most challenging yet critical components of the entire process was to establish the scope of what could be described in an annual metrics request. The Task Force wanted to tell the rich and detailed story of why the indicators matter and what results were produced. Many times, the conversation, both within the Task Force and with those to whom the metrics were presented in the trial phase (see Combined Report, 2013, p. 3), circled back to the question, "If we are trying to describe, or asked to describe, the *impact* or *value* of community engagement and economic activities of UNC institutions to the citizens of North Carolina, then don't we need to collect and assess *outcomes*?"

As Barbara Holland, an informal advisor to the Task Force, repeated frequently throughout conference calls: "inputs are meaningful, even if they don't tell the entire story." She urged the members to avoid underestimating the value of inputs and outputs, as they begin to describe the "picture" that one is trying to "paint" more clearly (Holland, 2012). An indicator provides clues as to what is happening without fully describing (and sometimes even fully understanding) a phenomenon. In previously undefined areas, indicators can serve as important first steps in the first round of data collection because indicators provide benchmarks against which to compare progress. Collected across time, indicators have the potential to illuminate ranges and trends.

To help frame the value of indicators as both meaningful and feasible, Jerry McGuire (co-chair) introduced a medical analogy. He reasoned:

> If we were physicians trying to assess the relative health of a human body, what metrics would we use? We would certainly take measures of blood pressure, heart and respiration rate, and body temperature. Knowing these indicates that the body is alive. Tracking these metrics over time, one can tell whether the body is in distress, or, if previously distressed, whether it is getting better. Further, these metrics are easy and inexpensive to obtain. Anyone with minimal equipment and training can collect them. However, we know that we could get a more complete picture of health if the physician ordered an MRI or other specialty tests. But costs are prohibitive, and we're not yet sure that we need an MRI, or what even we would do with that level of detail. What then are those pressure points we might collect that can indicate the relative health of community engagement and economic development across the UNC system? (J. McGuire, personal communication, September 3, 2012)

This analogy proved useful across conversations with various stakeholders (see Combined Report, 2013; Evans, 2013) to whom the metrics were presented, in large part, because it helped to address the value of input metrics in the absence of robust outcome measures.

The Task Force also felt that it was important that the indicators addressed the activities of multiple, key, university constituent groups and their relationship to achieving core educational and institutional priorities. Specifically, the metrics needed to include how university faculty, staff, student, and alumni community engagement and economic development activities contributed to the tripartite mission of the university system: excellence in teaching and learning, research and creative activities, and outreach and public service (Combined Report, 2013, p. 3). This approach was grounded in earlier efforts undertaken by the University of Minnesota's (UMN) Public Engagement Metrics Committee (University of Minnesota, 2008) for its five campuses, as shared during a meeting with Andy Furco, UMN's vice president for public engagement, and his colleagues.

Criteria 2 and 3: Are Commonly Requested and Nationally Recognized Metrics

Because feasibility of data collection was a high priority of the Task Force, aligning the GA's annual request to commonly requested and nationally recognized metrics was a priority. What data might already be collected that can be drawn from, and what data might likely need to be collected in the future for other requests, honors, recognitions, and accreditations? How can we minimize our efforts while maximizing data usage?

In its review of existing institutional metrics and data sets, the Task Force found that, almost without exception, the UNC institutions did not have current, comprehensive, reliable data on community engagement and economic development. The majority of data available were largely from institutional responses to (a) association requests for data (e.g., North Carolina Campus Compact; National Campus Compact; National Advisory Council on Innovation and Entrepreneurship; the Association of Public Land-grant Universities' Commission on Innovation, Competitiveness, and Economic Prosperity); (b) information for award and recognition applications (e.g., President's Honor Roll for Community Service; the Washington Center's Higher Education Civic Engagement Award); (c) information for accreditations (e.g., Southern Accreditation of Colleges and Schools); and (d) information for the Carnegie Foundation's Community Engagement elective designation.

The same was true for other surveys or requests shared across UNC campuses via the Economic Transformation Council (a pre-existing, cross-institution council that advised the UNC GA on economic development issues and initiatives), such as the request based on items from the National Advisory Council on Innovation and Entrepreneurship. Some campuses had custom reports describing the total economic impact of their institution on the local and state economies. These focused largely on economic multipliers, such as university purchasing, employment, and estimates of student spending locally (living and entertainment expenditures), but the specific measures and assumptions varied from campus to campus. Several members served on the Association of Public Land-grant Universities (APLU) Commission on Innovation, Competitiveness, and Economic Prosperity's (CICEP) most recent efforts to develop 20 measures of university contributions to regional economies (APLU, 2014, 2011). This built on the prior work of the Committee on Institutional Cooperation's (CIC) Committee on Engagement that, in collaboration with the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (now APLU), released a report (Committee on Institutional Cooperation, 2004) that established definitions and benchmarks for engagement strategies as well as 88 separate quantitative and qualitative outcome indicators customized to discipline and institution. Though in existence for a decade, the Task Force found that these, too, had not been adopted by most of the 16 UNC institutions (so there was no existing data from which to cull) and many of the items were specific to outreach and extension-type activities.

Only a handful of institutions had responded to any one of the several requests from national associations, with the exception of the Southern Accreditation Colleges and Schools (SACS), which accredits all UNC system institutions. But the data collected and the narrative format did not allow for commonly defined metrics. Further, data were not systematically or continuously tracked in the years between applications or accreditations, so collecting even the same metrics as these required a new and unique round of requests from many different offices across UNC institutions. Hence, no comprehensive common data sets were found across even the majority of campuses.

To further confirm the Task Force's understanding that no single strategy or set of metrics had yet emerged from other state or national efforts, Boney asked the Education Advisory Board (EAB), a nonprofit research and consulting company, to provide a custom research brief. The report, *Measuring and Encouraging Community Engagement and Economic Development* (Greenberg & Moore, 2012), provided a literature review as well as findings from interviews with six senior administrators who lead community engagement and economic development initiatives at six public universities and colleges outside of the UNC system. The interviewers asked the administrators to describe metrics, mechanisms to track and record data, and data used to evaluate annual progress.

The conclusion of the EAB report was that "(m)ost (university representatives contacted for the study) continue to rely on project-specific data and economic impact reports as they explore more comprehensive measurement tools" (Greenberg & Moore, 2012, p. 11). Further, "a lack of standard measures inhibits comparisons (or, in the case of the UNC system's efforts, common indicators) across institutions" (p. 12). Institutions had neither widely adopted a single set of metrics nor implemented systematic assessment mechanisms to collect data centrally, making it impossible to assess either *current* activities and outcomes or *trends* of activities and outcomes across time or institutions. The EAB report's findings aligned with similar reports and reviews of current approaches and frameworks for measuring and assessing community engagement created by Hanover Research (2011), Hart and Northmore (2010), the National Coordination Centre for Public Engagement (Hart, Northmore, & Gerhardt, 2009), and our own Task Force members' involvement with national associations (e.g., CICEP, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching). The report's findings supported the Task Force's recommendation to establish its own set of trial indicators. As Boney recounts of his assessment of the field, "We went into this knowing that there was no national consensus on what matters, what could be counted. We committed to trying anyway and to adapting it over time based on what we found" (L. Boney, personal communication, June 26, 2013).

Criterion 4: Demonstrates the Pervasiveness, Depth, Interconnectedness, and Impact of Contributions

The number and range of communities and issues addressed by community engagement and economic development is enormous, particularly when one considers the contributions of 16 campuses across a state with 100 counties. How then to select relatively few metrics that meaningfully demonstrate the pervasiveness and depth of UNC campus's interconnectedness to, relationships with, and collective impact on the residents of North Carolina?

The Task Force determined that pervasiveness and depth of all public contributions should align to the tripartite missions of the institutions, as they were common to each UNC institution, including the North Carolina (high) School of Science and Math. Within these missions, it was decided to select a few priority areas that are core to the health and vitality of North Carolina, ones that would not go away, and which were common across the greatest number of campuses. The three indicator areas determined by the Task Force members to be foundational and common to both community engagement and economic development activities and outcomes were pre-K to 12 education, health and wellness, and entrepreneurship. The rationale for selecting these three areas was that in order to have healthy, safe, and vibrant communities, the state populace and economy needs continuous and excellent education, access to quality health care, and support for new and emerging businesses in a rapidly changing and global economy. Importantly, these also were areas in which key institutional constituents are actively involved through teaching and learning, scholarship and creative activities, and public service and outreach.

Beyond student enrollment and graduation in high priority areas, the pervasiveness of UNC's contributions could be made evident through its wide reaching public-serving activities and events. UNC institutions provide thousands of personal, professional, and organizational development opportunities through its many continuing education programs and units. Across the system, institutions provide myriad events, venues, broadcasts, and performances that significantly impact local businesses and economies directly and indirectly through ticket sales, concessions, and industries and businesses related to these services. One Task Force member representing a rural-serving institution insisted that, particularly in rural areas with smaller populations and fewer industries and employers, university-sponsored services and events such as continuing education, athletics, lectures, and cultural events contribute significantly to the quality of life of communities, which is a key factor in attracting and retaining residents as well as businesses.

Criterion 5: Aids in Setting Strategic Directions for Individual Institutions and System-Wide

In the Task Force's efforts to establish UNC-wide metrics, members worked conscientiously to propose metrics that would help the individual institutions to define and advance their own community engagement and economic development agendas. The members discussed: What are (or should be) the goals and priorities of the individual institution's activities with, in, and for communities – and how might the push from General Administration to collect these metrics serve our individual efforts while also telling a system-wide story?

The adage, "what counts gets counted, and what gets counted counts" describes the value of a metrics initiative, particularly one that is established at the system level. A request from the system president about metrics and measures related to community engagement and economic development signals that it is important work, as well as infers, reiterates, and reifies what types of activities and outcomes define this work. With this in mind, Task Force members worked to imagine what data they would need to push forward campus-level priorities and plans, as well as how this request would influence definitions about community engagement and economic development activities and contributions.

An example of how this intention to serve each institution's plans to encourage and enhance community engagement and economic development efforts and outcomes was manifested in the Task Force's intentional inclusion of both community-*based* learning and community-*engaged* learning measures. Although only 5 of the 16 institutions had in place a course designation process to differentiate and track community-engaged learning (i.e., service-learning) from community-based learning (e.g., internships, practica, field placements, etc. that did not involve reciprocal partnerships with community members and organizations), the Task Force wanted to support and encourage campus efforts to increase the number and quality of community-engaged courses, recognizing the significant and positive effects on students' academic, personal, professional, and civic development and success when implemented with fidelity to the standards of high quality engagement (see Billig & Weah, 2008; Giles & Eyler, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Criterion 6: Institutions have the Capacity for Annual Collection of Data

The final criterion was that metrics had to be available to be collected on an annual basis to identify trends in community engagement and economic development. An annual collection allows institutions to establish baselines which can be used to set goals informed by data as well as priorities, and then to track trends to measure success vis-à-vis those community engagement and economic development goals. The requirement for annual reporting also reinforced what many campuses that had applied or reapplied to the Carnegie Foundation for the Community Engagement elective classification had already learned: institutions needed to establish more robust systems to track and measure various community engagement and economic development activities and outcomes.

While every effort was made to draw on existing data and systems, it was clear from the trial phase that adequate systems were not yet in place for most campuses for many of the metrics and measures. For example, data on co-curricular student community engagement and economic engagement activities were so unreliable across all institutions that the Task Force was compelled to remove it from the list of indicators.

Beyond the co-curricular student hours reported as part of staff-managed university programs, it is nearly impossible to accurately capture the number of hours students are involved in co-curricular service as few campuses had systems in place to do so (with the exception of several campuses that require community service hours as part of graduation requirements). Even in these institutions, the total number of hours reported is understood to be a gross undercount of total hours contributed by university students. At best, system-wide annual collection of such data would not reveal meaningful trends toward specific goals. At worst, variation due to "guess-timates" could lead to public misrepresentations of students' service contributions to the State.

Although the Task Force's charge was satisfied once indicators were approved by President Ross and administered by General Administration, an ongoing Community Engagement Council was formed, parallel to the Economic Transformation Council, to continue to steward the metrics process as well as inform other decisions and activities related to supporting community engagement system-wide. In this way, Council members support their own campus data collection and reporting efforts, and serve in a continuing advisory role to the UNC General Administration relative to analysis and use of the data as well as the refinement of the items as capacities to collect the data increase over time – and measuring outcomes becomes more possible.

Results of the Trial Process

Although the primary purpose of this article is to define the process and articulate key lessons learned, it is useful to briefly list and describe the metric areas and measures ultimately selected from the development of the six criteria. These are identified in Table 1.

Those seeking to understand the definitions, data sources, collection strategies, and justifications provided for measures are encouraged to consult the two manuals that emerged from the trial process: the initial Combined Report of the Community Engagement and Economic Development Metrics Task Forces, which proposed the trial metrics used by the campuses to report 2011-2012 data, and the 2013-2014 UNC Economic and Community Engagement Metrics Manual, which presents the metrics that resulted from the trial process. These and additional reports and publications related to system- and institution-wide metrics are available on the University of North Carolina at Greensboro's Institute of Community and Economic Engagement's website: http://communityengagement.uncg.edu/publications-reports/.

Conclusion

Three-time university president Judith Ramaley argues that organizational change in higher education is best approached as "a scholarly act" (2000, p. 75). By this, she means that, as leadership teams seek to implement ideas, policies, and practices, they are advised to follow a scholarship model: clearly define the areas to be addressed; scour the literature and field for existing research for models, exemplars, and other types of information that may be relevant to and inform the work at hand; propose methods or strategies that align with the area under focus; implement the idea or action; interpret and assess the process and results to understand what worked (and did not work) and why; and then make changes and repeat the process if and when necessary. The UNC trial phase used a scholarly process and must continue as such if UNC's full contribution is to be communicated to the public.

The trial phase of the UNC system, at the time of this writing, concluded with a list of indicators based on inputs (e.g., course offerings) and outputs (e.g., graduates, job placements) as well as several narrative-based stories of public engagement and contribution. Moving quickly to the next step of crafting outcome measures was identified as a critical goal by the Task Force. In the ensuing years, the Community

Table 1
2013-2014 Metric Areas and Measures for Community Engagement and Economic Development (based on trial phase)

Metric Area 1: Student Curricular Engagement. Through community-based, community-engaged, and entrepreneurship-focused learning experiences, UNC students develop and expand critical thinking skills, gain the ability to apply discipline-based theory to resolve challenges and problems faced by North Carolina residents across academic disciplines, and are prepared to enter jobs in high growth and priority areas for North Carolina. [e.g., student participation in community-based and community-engaged academic learning; education pipelines focused on health and wellness as well as PreK-12 education].

MEASURE	1.1: Student Participation in Community-Based Academic Learning
	1.1a: Student Participation in Community-Engaged Academic Learning (if applicable) (a subset of 1.1)
	1.2: Formal Entrepreneurial Education Efforts
	1.3: Education Pipelines Focused on Health and Wellness
	1.4: Education Pipelines Focused on PreK-12 Education
	1.5: Job Placement, Earning Rates, and Residency

Data to Collect per Measure

1.1	Total number of student enrollments in community-based learning courses for academic credit
1.1	Total number of student enrollments in community-engaged learning courses for academic credit (if applicable) (a subset of 1.1)
1.2	Total number of graduates with majors, minors, concentrations, certificates, or masters degrees in entrepreneurship programs (if applicable)
1.3	Total number of graduates with health and wellness degrees
1.4	Total number of graduates with preK-12 education degrees
1.4	Total number of graduates who have been successfully certified/licensed for preK-12 education professions
1.5	Total number of graduates in jobs related to providing health and wellness services in North Carolina
1.5	Total number of graduates in jobs related to providing preK-12 education in North Carolina
1.5	Total number of graduates in jobs in North Carolina within one year of graduation (includes all graduates at all levels)
1.5	Earning rates of students placed in jobs in North Carolina

Metric Area 2: Cutting Edge Research, Inquiry, and Creative Activity through Community Engagement and Economic Development. Through community engagement and economic development, UNC faculty, staff, and students generate cutting edge research, inquiry, and creative activities that build the capacities of communities to address pressing issues and build healthy and productive futures. [e.g., sponsored research by North Carolina organization, North Carolina community involvement in sponsored projects].

MEASURE	2.1 Sponsored research investments by any sponsor
	2.2 Sponsored research investments by North Carolina organizations
	2.3 North Carolina community involvement in sponsored projects
	2.4 Industry-sponsored research

Data to Collect per Measure

2.1	Total dollars of sponsored research investments by any sponsor
2.2	Total dollars of sponsored research investments by North Carolina organizations
2.3	Total dollars of North Carolina community involvement in sponsored projects
2.4	Total dollars of industry-sponsored research

Metric Area 3: Transformative Community-University Projects and Partnerships for Mutual Benefit. UNC faculty, staff, and students connect their intellectual capital and resources in a way that build the capacities of communities to address pressing issues and build healthy and productive futures. [e.g., community-university projects and partners].

MEASURE:	3.1 Community-university projects
	3.2 Community partners

Data to Collect per Measure

3.1	Provide descriptions of up to 25 Community-University Projects (brief description, sector, county, number of partners involved, number of community organizations or groups involved)
3.2	Number of community partner organizations or groups involved (in the Projects reported for 3.1)

Metric Area 4: Transformative Continuing Education and Outreach to Enhance the Quality of Life in North Carolina. UNC provides important areas for continual learning to improve the potential for personal and professional development. UNC also delivers various events, venues, broadcasts, and performances that produce community development and economic impacts through ticket sales, concessions, and industries and businesses related to these services. (e.g., continuing education and/or professional development experiences; community participation in UNC-sponsored events and media presentations).

MEASURE	4.1 Continuing education and/or professional development experiences
	4.2 Community participation in UNC-sponsored events and media presentations

Data to Collect per Measure

4.1	Total number of enrollments in non-credit courses (face-to-face or hybrid)
4.1	Total number of enrollments in non-credit courses (100% online)
4.1	Total number of enrollments in certificate-awarding and continuing education non-credit courses (face-to-face, hybrid, or 100% online)
4.2	Total attendance of university events, including athletic, performance, lecture series, museum attendance, and special events

Metric Area 5: Success Stories of Community Engagement and Economic Development. UNC has the opportunity to showcase, through two-page narrative descriptions, exemplary projects, programs, or initiatives that make a positive and profound impact on the quality of life in North Carolina. (e.g., stories of economic development, community-university partnerships, and student co-curricular community engagement).

MEASURE	5.1 Collection of Community Engagement and Economic Development Success Stories

Data to Collect per Measure

5.1	3-5 narrative illustrations of exemplary projects, programs, or initiatives that make a positive and profound impact on the quality of life in North Carolina (must include an economic development story, a community-university partnership story, and a student co-curricular community engagement story).

Engagement Council is expected to inform and steward the implementation and evolution of the annual metrics on their campuses and on behalf of General Administration. In what ways and to what extent are campuses directly and indirectly "moving the needle" on important community and State priorities? For example, it is meaningful to track the number of UNC graduates who enter into jobs in the pre-K -12 and health care systems, or who create new or contribute to existing businesses and industries. But it is even more compelling to showcase *what effect* these individuals have had on community-level priorities and indicators, such as increased literacy, better infant and mother health rates, and increased revenue within communities and the State. Prioritizing and selecting meaningful outcome measures are expected to follow from this first step of creating indicators, and will serve as a case study for future scholars and leaders to examine.

Although the identification of meaningful outcome measures are anticipated, the actual collection of the data remains a critical obstacle to advancing institutional understanding, planning, and assessment, as well as research and scholarship in the community engagement field. As the Task Force's trial process confirmed, survey-based tools are neither sufficient nor sustainable for large-scale data collection and reporting. For example, campuses that used the surveys developed to collect information separately about community engagement partnerships and economic development events and activities found that individuals frequently selected and completed the wrong survey tool (i.e., completed the community engagement partnership survey to report information about unilaterally offered services and events), and vice versa. Not only was inaccurate data collected as individuals attempted to complete all fields [e.g., someone entering information about a music concert series naming the schools in attendance in her response to the item: "community partner(s) name(s)?"], but individuals on campus completing the information remained unaware and uninformed about the significant differences in practices, expectations, and outcomes between the two types of activities. This experience supports the call for more sophisticated and dynamic tools that can easily, efficiently, and reliably communicate, sort, track, and report community engagement and other public-serving activities and contributions, as well as increase the capacity of institutions and systems to identify and advance institutional, community, and scholarly priories (Janke, Medlin, & Holland, 2014). Thus, establishing outcomes measures and assessment strategies will require not only scholarly efforts but also technology as more robust, standardized, and commonly assessable instruments and mechanisms are developed.

Finally, emphasis on the next steps of establishing outcome assessment measures ought not to overshadow the impact that the collection of meaningful institution-wide indicators can provide for individual institutions and university systems. Relatively complete institutional portraits of engagement and contribution will help executive leaders, as well as community engagement and economic development administrators, to understand the full range and scope of community engagement and economic development purposes, activities, impact areas, and constituents, as well allow for the clarification of goals for community engagement as a teaching pedagogy and approach to research, creative activities, and public service in ways that achieve key institutional strategic goals. Comprehensive collection of key indicators can serve the development of research agendas to assess the outcomes of various types of community engagement and economic development activities on university and community constituents. Importantly, it will allow institutions to convene institution-level conversations with key constituents. All this can strengthen each institution's reputation as a proactive and responsive member of the public (Janke & Holland, 2013). In these ways, institutions will not only be able to tell their stories better, but more importantly, be better able to do meaningful and effective community engagement and economic development work (Weerts, 2011).

The Task Force's work provides new data and opportunities to the community engagement and economic development fields through its development of criteria, metric areas, and measures. The coming years of data collection and review will test the extent to which the indicators selected are meaningful and feasible. Future scholarship will explore and interpret the success of the initiative to achieve various outcomes, both at the institution and system levels. Several aspects will be especially important to understand, including the extent to which the centralized requests for common data increase institutional acceptance of and support for community engagement and economic development, as well as the effect that annual requests may have on the development and adoption of systematic measures to collect data from diverse institutional constituents who contribute to the public service mission. All of this and more remains an open question – and challenge – to the fields of community engagement and economic development.

Notes

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