Extension’s evolving role in discovery, learning and engagement

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...to aid in diffusing among the people of the United States useful and practical information on subjects relating to agriculture and home economics, and to encourage the application of the same.

(Smith-Lever Act, 1914)
...foster collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.

(Carnegie Commission, 2012)
The Extension model

Based on an expert model in which universities discover and communicate new knowledge.

Assumes that if people have better information will change their behavior. Many of us learned Everett Roger’s diffusion of innovation.

The lexicon of Extension speaks loudly of knowledge transfer (audience, target, impact)

Exception was community development work.
Outreach and Engagement

Outreach still tends to be one-way in nature but can be informed by community or learner needs. Still heavily based on an expert model where the university brings knowledge to you.

The boundaries between knowledge creators and users are crumbling. Instead they are engaging with each other as equals, learning from each other in a spirit of mutualism and reciprocity. That is engagement.
Outreach begins with an answer.
Engagement ends with one.
Defining engagement

The partnership of university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to:

- enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity
- enhance curriculum, teaching and learning
- prepare educated, engaged citizens
- strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility
- address critical societal issues
- contribute to the public good.

(Fitzgerald, et al., 2005)
Defining engagement

...that aspect of teaching that enables learning beyond the campus walls, that aspect research that makes what we discover useful beyond the academic community, and the aspect of service that directly benefits the public.

(Ohio State University, 2002)
Defining engagement

The centrality of engagement is critical to the success of higher education in the future. Engagement is essential to most effectively achieving the overall purpose of the university, which is focused on the knowledge enterprise. Today’s engagement is scholarly, is an aspect of learning and discovery, and enhances society and higher education.

University Outreach and Engagement Strategic Conference

- Research (Discovery)
- Outreach (Engagement)
- Teaching (Learning)
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Teaching (Learning)  Research (Discovery)

Outreach (Engagement)
If community engagement is also about discovery and learning, and if the Extension Service is about community engagement, then what is the role of the Extension Service in discovery and learning?
Defining Extension’s role

Can research questions be refined by engaging community members in purposeful dialogue?

Can community problems be solved through engagement with on-campus researchers?

Can graduate students become more job-ready by engaging in real-world experiences?

Can internships, service learning, practica, field experiences, and student service benefit communities?
Defining Extension’s role

Can community members help interpret and give meaning to research findings?

Can practicing professionals participate in continuing education offered by OSU faculty?

Can input from employers help shape graduate and undergraduate curricula?

Can county faculty help identify high achieving students and students of diverse backgrounds?
Community engagement scholarship

...community engagement scholarship...is the collaborative generation, refinement, conservation, and exchange of mutually beneficial and societally relevant knowledge that is communicated to and validated by peers in academe and the community.

(Academy of Community Engagement Scholarship, 2012)
Community engagement scholarship

Rigor is not based solely in procedures utilized, but also in the openness and transparency of the scholarly enterprise in ways that value and welcome active participation on an equal basis by academic and community scholars and practitioners.

(Academy of Community Engagement Scholarship, 2012)
Engagement adds value

A recently released white paper suggests that through engagement we can shift the established framework of higher education to a stronger level of societal relevance that transforms us into a stronger (healthier), wealthier, and more equitable society while advancing institutional goals.

It can also foster stronger support from multiple sources for the future of higher education and society.

(Association of Public and Land Grant Universities, 2011)
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Higher education and communities are learning to partner in innovative ways so that together they inspire scholarship that will one day change the world.