Centrality of Engagement in Higher Education

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Economic preeminence and national security were influenced greatly by two visionary laws...the Morill Act of 1862 and the GI Bill.

Investment in public education is based on the belief that society benefits from education...unfortunately those legislators who supported this notion are in the rear view mirror....too many look at education as a consumer product...a private good.
Comments by Robert Gates at APLU

Continued disinvestment in public higher education is a formula for national decline. Public universities have gone from state supported, to state assisted, to state located.

But universities, too, need to cut costs, demonstrate relevance, and improve results.
Comments by Robert Gates at APLU

If public universities don’t reform the way they do business, Federal and state governments will do it for them. Government, however is like a dinosaur. It has a heavy foot, small brain, and no fine motor skills.
Centrality of Outreach and Engagement
Fitzgerald, Bruns, Sonka, Furco, and Swanson (2012)

Public higher education beset by challenges and opportunities related to its relevance and cost.

Propose that community and public engagement, as aspects of learning and discovery, are central to addressing these challenges and opportunities.

Contributes to advancement of the United States as a stronger, wealthier, and more equitable country.
Centrality of Outreach and Engagement
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A continual push-pull between knowledge creation and the resolution of societal problems.

Began with a heavily applied approach with the passage of the Morrill Act. Adopted German model of advanced study and laboratory research around 1900. Shifted back to application in WWII. Advent of NIH and NSF exacerbated the impact of the German model and influenced faculty rewards.
Pendulum swinging back to application. Institutions of higher education are rethinking their structure; epistemology and pedagogy; integration of teaching, research, and service mission; and reward systems.

NIH and NSF are expecting adequate planning and funding for “broader impacts” in grants.

The engaged university produces research that benefits the society and educates students for productive roles in a modern and diverse world.
...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)
“Too often, faculty assume that in a campus, community partnership, the faculty role is to teach, the students role is to learn, and the community partner’s role is to provide a laboratory or set of needs to address or explore.”

“In fact, successful university community partnerships will involve all participants as learners and teachers in shared efforts to seek solutions to society’s intractable “wicked” problems.”
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.
Research (Discovery)

Teaching (Learning)

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?
Strengthening Curricular Engagement through PHHS Extension

A provost-supported initiative to involve county faculty in strengthening curricular engagement.

Recruiting high-achieving students and building a diverse student body

Brokering internships, field experiences, service learning, and student service across Oregon.

Training on campus to help county faculty learn about academic programs and internship.
Building Health Extension

A provost-supported initiative to catalyze development of a 21st century Extension program focused on health.

Activities include continuing education, CBPR, and community/population level interventions.

Requires campus/county partnerships

OSU is a national leader in defining and operationalizing health Extension.
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)
HIGHER EDUCATION AND COMMUNITIES ARE LEARNING TO **partner** IN INNOVATIVE WAYS SO THAT TOGETHER THEY **inspire** SCHOLARSHIP THAT WILL ONE DAY **change** THE WORLD.