

Report of the Master Plan Task Force on Creating Community Partnerships



Figure 1 –First Town Hall Meeting on Community Engagement, April 14, 2015

Introduction:

The Task Force: Objectives and Membership

The Task Force on Creating Community Partnerships was formed to address community partnership issues associated with the University of Northern Iowa (UNI) campus. It was asked to consider such questions as:

- What are the important considerations for encouraging partnerships for the provision of facilities and services to the university?
- How can the campus master plan foster increased partnerships to support students over the next 5, 10 and 20 years?
- Where are areas in which the university and the city can work collaboratively to enhance the community to the benefit of both?
- What types of partnerships can be forged between business and the university to better serve students, faculty and staff as well as the community of Cedar Falls, and the citizens of Iowa?

The Task Force on Creating Community Partnerships members include:

Chair - Julia Bullard, Professor, School of Music

Jeff Byrd, Department Head and Professor, Art

Marcene Seavey, STEM Coordinator, Academic Affairs

Steve Carignan, Associate Dean Special Programs and Executive Director, GBPAC

Jan Hanish, Assistant Vice President, Administrative and Financial Services

Doug Johnson, College Hill Partnership

Ron Gaines, Director, City of Cedar Falls Public Works

Helen Haire, Chief of Police/Director, Public Safety

Wes James, IAMC Operations Director, Greater Cedar Valley Alliance & Chamber

Stephanie Sheetz, City of Cedar Falls Planning and Community Services

Scott Ketelsen, Director, University Relations

Hillery Oberle, Director, Corporate and Foundation Relations, University Relations

Tanner Westberg, Student

Lisa Kratz, Director, Maucker Union Administration

Kim Burger-Manning, City of Cedar Falls Tourism & Visitors Bureau

Kevin Blanshan, Director, INRCOG

Background

In examining the potential for community partnerships with The University of Northern Iowa in relation to the university's Facilities Master Plan, the task force committee is encouraged by the many partnerships that exist from both the academic and non-academic sectors of the campus. The committee is further encouraged by the vast potential that exists to build more meaningful relationships between the university and the broader community. In many instances, UNI has both the personnel who are excited by community engagement and collaboration, and the facilities that can support such activities. This report is about how to develop these opportunities in a more collaborative and intentional way.

The university has a great size advantage – large enough to offer a wide range of experiences, but small enough to offer meaningful, direct, personal experiences that will benefit our students, faculty and staff, and the communities with which the university engages with on a daily basis. Community engagement in the areas of service learning, experiential learning, research and creative activity, internships, and academic offerings will help to define the “UNI Experience.” The task force, as well as the university as a whole, is poised to take an important step in defining UNI in ways that are unique and offer exceptional opportunities to students, faculty and staff, and make substantial contributions to the communities that the university serves.

The university's commitment to community engagement and outreach is growing, and in order to take full advantage of the existing and potential opportunities, the university must commit to policies and procedures that will facilitate the growth of these relationships. The committee has heard many comments regarding the need for UNI to develop a more "user friendly" approach by making information and university access less cumbersome, and have consistent and clear policies and procedures that support such partnerships.

Goals

To promote and encourage engagement and cooperation between the university and the broader community in which students, faculty and staff live and work to the benefit of both.

Action Steps:

- IDENTIFY and develop points of intersection to benefit our common interests and solve common problems.
- BUILD lasting relationships between the university and community at the local, regional, state, national, and global levels.
- INTEGRATE and coordinate these relationships with the Academic Master Plan, Enrollment Management, Recruiting/Retention, and Alumni Relations.

Priorities

1. Accessibility



Figure 2 - UNI and Cedar Falls Community Members at the First Town Hall Meeting on Community Engagement at UNI.

Ease of finding and promoting opportunities for off-campus partners to engage with UNI.

Physical accessibility of campus by improving ease of accessibility for off-campus visitors and for on-campus users to engage in community, including transportation, parking, sidewalks, bike trails.

Continuing to accomplish a completely disability-friendly campus by improving services to make campus more accessible for those with disabilities. Ensure that the university is working with Disability Advisory & Advocacy Committee (DAAC)

to improve understanding of challenges and to address those challenges.

The development of a restructured, simple campus map to improve ease of use.

Increase the use of internal signage/wayfinding to improve ease of navigating campus (especially for those unfamiliar with campus).

2. Efficiency

Cost savings, cost effectiveness, and use of resources need to be considered to ensure that as decisions are made regarding use of resources, renovations, new construction, etc., the university explores opportunities for partnerships or collaborations that will be mutually beneficial to UNI and the broader community.

Focus on sustainability (environmental and financial) to maintain and improve sustainability in internal and external collaboration.

Improve the flow of communication between UNI and external partners, including UNI's online presence.

Improve accuracy of estimation of use of existing space, including use of space by non-academic constituencies (partnerships, community outreach, etc.), and consider partnerships that would improve overall use of existing capacity.

Consideration of new spaces both on campus and off campus; consider creative and cost-effective solutions for our space needs.

3. Visibility

Ensure that our collaborations with community partners are well documented and promoted.

Make UNI front and center in the life of Iowa's business, recreation, arts and education communities.

Consider improvements to UNI website to improve ease of use, greater visibility and promotion of partnerships between UNI and community.

4. Engagement

Promote a vision of faculty, staff and students collaborating creatively with the business, arts, scientific, educational and service communities in the areas of academics, research, and service.

Problem solving through engagement with our community – working together, rather than in parallel.

- Promoting incentives for UNI to work *with* the broader community, and vice versa.
- Coordination with the Academic Master Plan to develop new and existing collaborations.

Opportunities

First, identify existing partnerships and streamline process for inventory of community partnership projects, particularly in the categories of Community Service and Engagement, Service Learning, Research/Applied Research, Experiential Learning, Internships, and Academic Program Partnerships.

Community Service and Engagement

Examples of current partnerships:

UNI Partnership with Volunteer Center of the Cedar Valley

Business and Community Services (BCS) service, consulting, entrepreneurial support

Service Learning

Example: School of Music Autism Spectrum Project

Research/Applied Science

Examples:

Arctic Social and Environmental Systems Research Laboratory (ARCSES)

Watershed/Water Quality Projects (Dry Run Creek)

Experiential Learning

Example: Metal Casting Center

Internships

Examples:

College of Education Student Teaching/Field Experience

College of Business Placements and Field Experience

Academic Partnerships

Examples:

Tallgrass Prairie partnership with the biology department

College of Education curriculum development with Waterloo/CF schools

Second, identify new opportunities and develop new partnerships and collaborations, particularly in the categories of Community Service and Engagement, Service Learning, Research/Applied Research, Experiential Learning, Internships, and Academic Program Partnerships.

Examples:

Partnerships with our **community** - i.e. Downtown Cedar Falls, Downtown Waterloo, College Hill, etc.

Partnerships with **businesses/industry** – e.g. STEM; Hospitality; top Cedar Valley employers such as John Deere, Hy-Vee, health care organizations; Cedar Valley Alliance & Chamber; etc.



Figure 3 - College Hill, Cedar Falls.

Partnerships with **education** – e.g. public schools, adult literacy programs, ESL, State Board of Education, etc.

Partnerships with **arts** – e.g. GBPAC and WCF Symphony, Waterloo Center for the Arts, Hearst Center, Grout Museums, Waterloo Community Playhouse, etc.

Partnerships with **service and not-for-profit** organizations – e.g. Boys & Girls Club, food banks, etc.

Partnerships with **professional/research** organizations - i.e. Iowa Academy of Science, NASA, American College Theater Festival, Speech & Drama, etc.

Partnerships with **Rural Initiatives** - agricultural, environmental, entrepreneurial.

Recommendations

- Establish a clear “front door” (i.e. designated office, personnel, and technology, as a point of contact) to the campus that is inviting to community partners and visitors who seek to develop partnerships and collaborate with the university.
- Review policies and procedures to identify barriers that prevent partnerships and/or opportunities for community engagement.
- Develop clear mechanisms for tracking and assessing partnership activities in order to evaluate success, define further opportunities for growth, document contributions, and recognize achievement.
- Support the development of recognition of community engagement/partnership activities in personnel reward structures (i.e. professional development, promotion and tenure, salary consideration, etc.).
- Establish physical satellite locations in area communities for teaching, research, service, intern and meeting support and cultural programming.
- Establish a sustaining committee to continue to develop ideas and plans for community engagement.