External Engagement and Partnerships

Background

Engagement with external communities—local, regional, state, national, and international—is central to the core mission of a world-class research university. These communities participate and collaborate in research, contribute to and benefit from it, and support it financially. The university's teaching is enhanced by students' participation in external partnerships, and students are current and future members of these communities. External communities sit at the nexus of the university's public service, and they are partners with whom the university shares vital resources. Envisioning UCSC's future requires viewing external engagement as both a single overarching priority and a constellation of distinct (but intersecting) areas.

UCSC has a long tradition of engagement with external communities:

- We have been pioneers in community based research (e.g. Santa Cruz Commons, Environmental Field Studies, Community Studies, the Global Information Internship Program, and the Center for Collaborative Research for an Equitable California.)

- Discoveries in the physical and biological sciences, engineering and applied sciences, and many other areas have entrepreneurial potential for the campus, promote local and regional business development opportunities, and leverage connections with Silicon Valley.

- Colleges (e.g. Merrill, College Nine, and College Ten), academic departments, and individual faculty members have developed strong service-learning programs and partnerships with community-based organizations.

- K-12 initiatives provide access to and preparation for higher education through direct programs to K-12 students (e.g. via the Educational Partnership Center and Santa Cruz County College Commitment); opportunities for UCSC students to tutor K-12 students; teacher professional development; a teacher credential program; and educational research.

- UCSC offers an array of innovative theater, music, art, and dance performances open to the public; exhibits and lectures by faculty, students and visiting colleagues or luminaries; and athletics and recreational opportunities.

- UCSC has been an active partner in supporting transportation solutions that benefit both the campus and the community (e.g. partnership with the Santa

Cruz Metropolitan Transit District, vanpools, bike shuttles, and Zipcars on campus and throughout Santa Cruz).

- The hiring of a new police chief and combining UCSC and Santa Cruz City fire management has enhanced campus-community collaboration in these areas.

Lessons Learned

UCSC has been a pioneer in community-based research and service learning initiatives over the years, but there is need for greater resources and support as well as coordination between the many related campus efforts. This includes a central location (both physical and virtual) and designated staff for community members and public sector agencies to contact, ensuring follow-through with local organizations and consistency given faculty and student turnover.

UCSC has a high degree of innovation and extraordinary faculty and students working on cutting-edge research with potential entrepreneurial value. Yet the ecosystem of patents, licenses, startups, and incubators found around many universities has not developed here. Our activity in these areas has mostly been reactive: patents are filed in response to faculty submitting disclosures and licenses are issued when we are approached by companies interested in our intellectual property. If we are to successfully create such an ecosystem of ideas, technologies, companies, and jobs, it must be a campus priority, not an afterthought to our research. Success with early-stage incubator space suggests a demand for more direct university support.

External stakeholder sessions found high satisfaction with UCSC's K-12 initiatives, especially those that prepare future teachers, provide professional development for current teachers, and support regional K-12 students through direct academic preparation and enrichment programs. Stakeholders also expressed a desire to increase and enhance the campus' communication and visibility with the K-12 community, opportunities for UCSC students and organizations to participate in K-12 schools, outreach to support K-12 student academic preparation for college, connecting theory to practice in preparing teachers to work with diverse students and new standards, and a focus on "21st Century skills" across initiatives.

Several challenges are associated with the university's ability to mount and promote cultural events intended to engage the community. UCSC is perceived as separate from the community ("a city on the hill") with transportation and parking issues and lacking a full-time restaurant. Stakeholders note that many outreach and awareness opportunities exist, but that we do not adequately promote them. Negative publicity around decisions to defund programs has overshadowed positive programs. The multiple UCSC "calendars" of events, silos of information, and separate promotion efforts are all confusing to the community.

Regarding resource management, stakeholders note an organizational culture shift since the Settlement Agreement, highlighting projects over the last five years such as the Greenwharf Project, Kaiser Permanente Arena, and integration of UCSC, Pogonip, Wilder and Gray Whale lands. Strong pockets of community hostility remain to the campus' growth in enrollment, physical planning, water consumption, transportation needs, and housing. UCSC's handling of the Long-Range Development Plan created negative perceptions that will take time to overcome.

National/State Trends/External Picture

Nationally, most top universities—including most or all other UCs—infuse community-based research into teaching and service learning. Other innovations include the use of technology (social networking and collaboration) and new ways of partnering and engaging (spurring economic vitality). Some have "centers for service-learning and collaborative research" where students, faculty, and staff partner with community-based organizations to fulfill mutual goals.

Most top universities and most or all other UC's also have offices dedicated to entrepreneurship and tech transfer. Systemwide, UC investment in this area is low relative to other research universities, with a $20 million funding gap between UC and its competitors, and UCSC is near the bottom of the UCs in support and activity in these areas.

K-12 trends imply the need for UCSC to bolster research, teaching, and service contributing to improving the academic preparation of students from wide-ranging racial, ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds; support the implementation of new K-12 standards; and help to "retool" teachers and schools with 21st century technology. These efforts take on increasing urgency given UCSC's future as a Hispanic Serving Institution and its responsibility for serving other sectors of California's diverse student population.

At universities with exceptional alumni support, clubs are formed in select geographic regions and disciplines to offer opportunities for service, friendship, and local and global networking. Peer public institutions have well-established alumni networks, volunteers, and programs to engage alumni, faculty, staff and current students in all aspects of university life.

Many institutions are shifting away from traditional print-based communication and outreach for community events toward social media (e.g. adding Facebook, Twitter, RSS feeds or email to web presence). Stakeholders also noted the need for shared physical facilities and communication strategies that are easily accessible to both university and community members.

Strategic Themes

An external engagement strategy must build on already-valued foundations and be envisioned as central to our core mission. Stakeholders value UCSC's world-class research, its reputation for innovation, and its commitment to diversity, equity, and social justice. As one external stakeholder put it, "to be clear, these are the things that we DON'T want you to change!" External engagement is crucial to the university's research, especially as economic uncertainties require efficiencies and synergy. External partnerships also strengthen the university's teaching and promote responsible stewardship, sustainability, and strong communities.

UCSC must establish more prominent (bidirectional) communication, visibility and presence between UCSC and the communities it serves. A large number of UCSC initiatives coexist with overlapping goals, no central coordination, varying degrees of connection with each other, and little opportunity to share expertise across campus and with external communities. Effort in this area must transcend traditional notions of public relations as "advertising" to actively include a deep understanding of the interests of various stakeholders in relation to external engagement and how those interests can be leveraged to enhance UCSC's mission and strengths.

Effective external engagement considers the needs of a wide range of stakeholders:

- Current UCSC students need tangible, practical, and related experience to enhance their learning and development and to increase employability post graduation. Key to success are service learning and community-based research, K-12 engagement and entrepreneurship opportunities.

- Future UCSC students, and the K-12 communities responsible for educating them, need the university's support in teacher preparation and development, academic support and enrichment, community engagement, and research.

- Faculty need projects to increase student learning regarding particular subject matters as well as opportunities to research particular trends in the world.

- Community-based organizations need sustained partnerships with UCSC to achieve mutual goals and provide consistent progress.

- Alumni wish to maintain relations with the university, provide learning or employment opportunities for our students, and share in mutual accomplishments.

- Business leaders and government representatives need commercialization, tech transfer and incubator space.

- Local and regional civic leaders seek partnership with UCSC to build a strong economy, vibrant community, and sustainable resource management.

Opportunities

Opportunities exist for UCSC—and the communities it serves—to reap significant rewards from greater investment in external engagements and partnerships consistent with the university's mission and strengths. Research- and teaching-based endeavors bolster UCSC's national and international reputation and build relationships with the communities with which it is engaged. They also help attract and retain diverse, excellent students, including those particularly interested in these types of personal, professional, and academic development opportunities.

Realizing opportunities related to tech transfer and entrepreneurship will lead to better relations with the community, more opportunities for students and faculty, job creation for the community, good publicity for the university, more intellectual property generation and disclosures, more licensing of our technology (leading to greater revenue), and other reputational benefits.

Capitalizing on academic relationships within the university and community leads to more cohesive, clear, and robust forms of community based research, service learning, and K-12 engagement. Community based research supports public sector organizations to make informed, data-driven decisions and gain new perspectives on community issues. Undergraduate and graduate students gain opportunities to apply academic learning to real-world problems and gain skills for the workplace and the fulfillment of advanced degrees. K-12 research and outreach contributes to a better-prepared, more diverse student body.

Exploring research with community partners as new avenues for external funding: Governmental and non-governmental granting organizations increasingly request or require partnerships between universities, the public sector, community-based organizations, and K-12 institutions. Initiatives with meaningful, ongoing collaboration are advantaged when for applying for these grants. Meanwhile, real opportunities exist to bring additional resources to communities, local agencies, and universities through these funded projects.

Unifying communications, outreach, and partnerships with the local community can be undertaken as part of overall UCSC branding. Stakeholders highlighted positive (and sometimes "too quiet") community efforts, such as the development of on-campus housing and tax contributions of the university that can counter negative perceptions. Stakeholders suggested focusing more on water, transportation and housing; reviving a "Town/Gown Committee;" participating in economic summits and development meetings; improved venues for sports and cultural events, and the creation of UCSC offices in Santa Cruz and Watsonville. The Good Neighbor program was cited as a positive exemplar of UCSC's civic and social involvement.

All of these initiatives contribute to *inspiring and engaging alumni*—themselves members of the communities with which UCSC engages. Alumni networking allows

students, faculty, and alums to make new connections and enhance relationships. Alumni could be invited to serve as career mentors to students and other alumna as well as to contribute, financially and otherwise, to research, teaching, and service opportunities with which they identify.

Short and Long Terms Plans

Planning for enhanced external engagement requires considering the specific nature of the different kind of partnerships highlighted above, each involving different strategies led and supported by different UCSC sectors. At the same time, when viewed as a single, integrated priority, planning for and investment in external engagement can lead to dynamic intersections among the areas. Consistent with UCSC's strengths in crossing boundaries, many of these intersections have already begun. A new institute of arts and sciences will bring artists, scientist, and humanists together and open up their work to the public. UCSC engineers and educational researchers are working with Silicon Valley non-profit organizations and entrepreneurs to use "big data" to improve the education of traditionally underserved students. UCSC faculty are contributing to start-up businesses that provide financial and social benefits to the community.

Short and long term planning can help create an external engagement "superstructure" to prioritize initiatives, identify mutual benefits for UCSC and target communities, evaluate infrastructure that supports them, and make strategic investment decisions. A wide variety of internal and external stakeholders must be part of the planning process as we seek to engage stakeholders, build partnerships, integrate initiatives, showcase the results, and keep all of the above firmly grounded in the university's core strengths in research, teaching, and public service.