

# How is 'community engagement' reflected in the practices of academics at University of Pretoria?

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# The research project

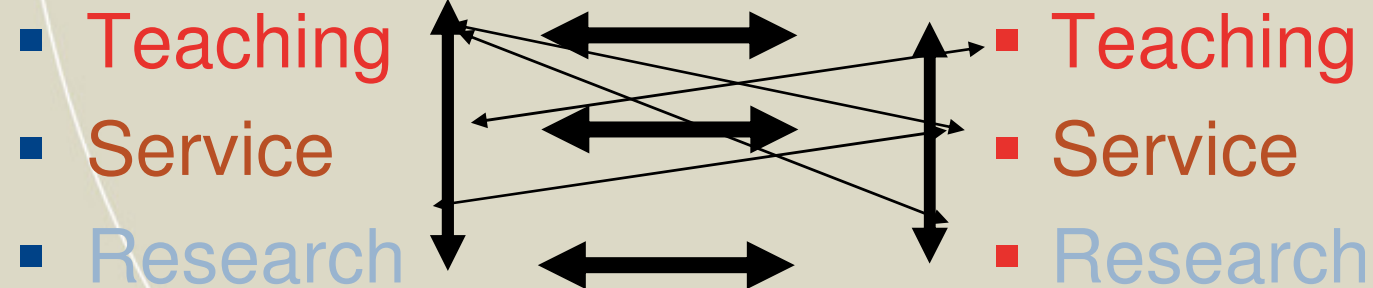
Map the scale and forms of interaction with external social partners, to contribute to understanding (community) engagement and the changing role of the university in building a national system of innovation

- in diverse disciplinary or knowledge fields
  - in different types of university
  - in terms of outcomes, benefits and risks
  - in terms of institutional conditions that facilitate and constrain
- 
- *We are working with .... to survey the ways in which academics are extending their knowledge to the benefit of external social partners*

# Scholarship for direct benefit of external audiences

**ENGAGED/  
RESPONSIVE**

**Not ENGAGED/  
Not RESPONSIVE**



# The UP survey sample

- Telephonic survey:
  - 2 159 academics: UP (34%), NMMU, CPUT, UCT, UFH
  - Response rate 62.5%, total 738 academics at UP
- Sample represents UP academic population well
  - Female 47%
  - White 81%
  - Professors 36%
  - Doctorates 55%
  - SET 58% : Humanities : 20% Business & Commerce  
14% : Education 13%
- Almost a quarter, 24% do not engage (UCT 7%, UFH 14%,  
NMMU 21%, CPUT 26%)

# What is distinctive about CE at UP?

- Institutionalisation of promotion of Community Engagement: structures, responsibilities and functions, cascaded down to all levels
- Focus site for CE activity: township campus
- Clear policy framework linked to strategic mission, formally accepted to guide activity (*new policy 2012?*)
- The conceptual definition of Community Engagement: five-fold typology

=> Challenge = to embed CE in academic practice

# A tension

- Curricular community engagement
  - Research-related community engagement  
*(new notion related to academic scholarship)*
  
  - Non curricular community engagement
  - Outreach
  - Social development and empowerment  
*(old notion of community service)*
- ⇒ Differing interpretations in faculties and departments

# How can evidence from the research project inform strategy?

What does the commitment to 'community engagement' mean as reflected in the **practices of academics**?

# Who are the main social partners of academics at UP?



- Highest reported frequency within academic realm
- BUT patterns of partners?
- Principal Component analysis – 6 factors – inspection of means: Academic, health, government, firm, *welfare*, civil society partners
- How frequently does a single academic engage ? 45% not at all or isolated instances
- How many partners do those who engage on a moderate to wide scale have? 36% = 1 partner, 12% = 2, 5% = 3 – small scale of networks
- Who is that one partner? 107 out of 206 = academics, 41 = health, 26 government, 22 firms, 8 welfare partners

# In what knowledge fields are these more frequent interactions?

- 118 in health
- Engineering ? Mostly academics and firms
- Social Science? Academic and government partners
- Firm partners? Engineering, Bus&Comm, Health, Science
- Welfare partners? Education
- Flagship projects in many faculties as focus of activity  
BUT scale of interaction amongst all academics ?

# Types of relationships?

- NOTE: Academics' outreach activity not assessed
- Same analytical methodology – WAI, PCA: 5 factors
- Correlation with types of partner?
- Academic partners (most frequent) most strongly associated with engaged research type, as are government partners
- Community teaching type relationships associated with welfare partners, civil society and government (but low frequency)

# Trends in practices of academics?

- ⇒ Diverse patterns between faculties
- ⇒ Partners and types of relationship promoted by Community Engagement policy are important - but scale?
- ⇒ Those who engage most frequently are doing so with other academic partners and in research relationships
- ⇒ Tension: traditional academic practices ↔ engaged practices ↔ community service

# How can this data be useful?

- Inform strategic policy development and implementation by highlighting the types of relationship and partners currently existing in practice
- Identify and target types of relationship or partners or outputs that wish to promote strategically, in line with UP strategic vision
- Debate around the substantive meaning of community engagement

# Thank you!

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