What the session aims to do

• Provide an interpretation of the current challenge of ‘engagement’ at NMMU
• Describe the research project
• Present a brief overview of the survey sample and population
• Illustrate how we are analysing the main patterns of engagement at NMMU
• Highlight key aspects of policy, structures and incentives to promote engagement
• Raise strategic questions for discussion
The challenge of institutionalisation

• NMMU context of merger, multiple campus, new identity as comprehensive university
• Process of strategic policy alignment, prioritising ‘engagement’ at institutional level
• BUT delays in formal approval of policy framework
• On base of long standing practices of academics at all sites, driven by individual motivations and capacities

⇒ Ad hoc institutional approach to promote engagement – not systematic nor strategic
⇒ A strength = clear conceptual framework centred on encompassing notion of ‘engagement’
How can evidence from the research project inform the **strategic institutional approach**?

How is ‘engagement’ reflected in the **practices of academics**?
Objective and questions

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

- What are the scales and forms of interaction in diverse disciplinary or knowledge fields?
- What are the scales and forms of interaction in different types of university?
- What are the outcomes, benefits and risks of these forms of interaction?
- What are the institutional conditions that facilitate and constrain interaction?
Scholarship for direct benefit of external audiences

- Teaching
- Service
- Research

ENGAGED/ RESPONSIVE

Not ENGAGED/ Not RESPONSIVE

Teaching
Service
Research
What we have done

• University case studies:
  • interviewed VCs, Deans, directors of engagement, research and teaching and key centres
  • documentary and internet sources
• Telephonic survey:
  • 2 159 academics: NMMU, CPUT, UCT, UP, UFH
  • Average response rate of 62.4%
  • NMMU response rate of 60.9%
  • 343 academics – 272 engage, 71 do not engage
  • 21% NMMU do not engage > 19% average
The survey:

“We are working with …. to survey the ways in which academics are extending their knowledge to the benefit of external social partners”
Profile of NMMU sample / total sample

- Most balanced: female 49% > average 44%
- 76% white > average 68%
- Similar spread of ages: 62% aged 40 to 59
- Rank: proportion of lecturer and below higher (55% > 45%), proportion of professors lower (18% < 29%)
- Highest qualification: fewer doctorates (34% < 41%), more masters (42% > 36%) than average
- Knowledge field: SET 47% (< average) Humanities 22% Business&Commerce 18% Education 13% (> average)
- Realised sample represents NMMU academic population well
The dimensions

• Social partners
• Types of relationship
• Channels of interaction
• Outputs
• Outcomes
• Challenges
• Those who do not engage – why not?
What are the main patterns of engagement at NMMU?

Emerging – and indicative - analysis of the NMMU data
## NMMU conceptual distinctions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement: Professional service provision</th>
<th>Engagement: Teaching and Learning</th>
<th>Engagement: Research and Scholarship</th>
<th>Outreach and community service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service to internal and external communities based on academic disciplines or university roles</td>
<td>Contextualisation of learning in community contexts, collaborative, mutually beneficial</td>
<td>Research partnerships to direct benefit of external partners</td>
<td>Inform or improve quality of life for marginalised sectors of local community, service, one way flow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eg consultancy, impact assessment, public debate, exhibitions</td>
<td>eg service learning, work integrated learning, short programmes, internships</td>
<td>eg contract research, participatory action research, technology transfer</td>
<td>eg volunteerism, community outreach, student recruitment programmes, sport activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Partners: describing the main trends

- **Total sample engaged on widest scale with other knowledge partners:** SA universities; international universities; funders

- **NMMU** engaged with social constituencies: schools, a local community, individual and households...NGOs

- Firms more than government: SMMEs, large... MNCs

- Government: more likely local or provincial

- Specialised social constituencies: clinics, welfare, small farmers

- Not organised civil society constituencies: political organisations, trade unions, civic associations
Reduce complexity – partner factors

1. **Firm partners**: MNEs, SMMEs, large firms
2. **Civil society**: Civics, political orgs, trade unions, social movements, community orgs
3. **Community**: Schools, individuals and households, local community
4. **Academic**: International univs, funding agencies, science council, SA univs
5. **Welfare**: Welfare agencies, clinics, NGOs
6. **Government**: provincial governments, local government, national government
Types of relationship: knowledge transmission dominates

• Teaching related most common, all on a wider scale than average
• Alternative forms of academic practice / good: isolated to moderate scale, but sizable.....
• Revenue generating: customised training, M&E, research consultancy, (collaborative R&D), technology transfer, on wider scale than average
• Specialised applied knowledge relationships: contract research, design and testing clinical services, commercialisation
Types of relationship and partners?

• Knowledge application is significantly associated with firm, civil society, academic and government partners
  • Those who engage more frequently in knowledge application activities are more likely to do so with firm partners – and so on….
• Outreach is significantly associated with all partners
• What kinds of relationships with diverse partners can NMMU deepen and promote in terms of the conceptual framework and strategic vision?
What are the outputs from engagement with diverse partners?

• Academic outputs are strongly associated with academic and government partners only
  • Those academics who interact more frequently with a government partner, tend to have more academic outputs
• Social outputs are associated with all partners except firms
• Technology outputs are strongly associated with firm, academic partners and suprisingly, civil society and community partners
• What practices are being highlighted by these trends?
• What is the balance of social partners that would lead to the desired kinds of outputs?
How can this data be useful?

• Inform strategic policy implementation by highlighting the types of relationship and partners currently existing in practice – how do they match with the proposed conceptual framework?
• Identify and target types of relationship or partners or outputs that the institution wishes to promote strategically, in line with NMMU strategic vision
• Inform debate around the substantive meaning of engagement at NMMU
Analysing policy, structures and incentives to promote engagement
### A growing policy alignment in NSI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Higher education policy</th>
<th>Science and technology policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus on equity, responsiveness to social justice and promoting public good</td>
<td>Focus on big science, economic demand and promoting global competitiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shift to promote ‘community engagement’ as integral to academic scholarship</td>
<td>Shift to include a focus on ‘broad based social innovation’ and technology for poverty reduction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How do universities give effect to the growing policy alignment and an integrated economic and social development mission?
4 critical aspects

• Insertion into institutional power structures
  • Increasing prioritisation into senior management structures, plan for highly structured accountability

• Coherent institutional policy and conceptual framework
  • Prioritised in Vision 2020 but engagement policy framework awaits formal approval
  • Strength is clear conceptualisation of a continuum of forms of ‘engagement’

• Coordination and alignment of internal university structures for research, teaching, innovation outreach
  • Ad hoc, lack of strategic coordination

• University-wide dissemination and incentive mechanisms
  • Embryonic, performance criteria and workload
Thank you!

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