Topic Team Report:
Community Partnerships, Engagement and Civic Leadership

Executive Summary

In an era of higher education "high anxiety," PSU has a distinct advantage: deep connection to place through community engagement and partnerships. PSU creates and provides rich learning, teaching, and research and service opportunities for students, faculty, and staff through a dense network of relationships across the metropolitan region. PSU engagement and partnership activities provide enormous value to regional stakeholders – ranging from individual elementary schools and non-profits to campus-level strategic partners such as PGE and OHSU. These activities also provide enormous value to students -- who gain applied, hands-on experience -- and faculty, who seek to conduct research and problem-solve in a community context.

PSU's leadership in engagement and partnership can and will translate into greater student recruitment and retention, support for local option funding among employers, and an increase in donor support and investment in PSU. To realize these gains, however, PSU must invest in a more robust, expanded, coordinated and connected infrastructure (staffing, systems, data, policies, procedures, communications etc.) for engagement and partnership work.

The Topic Team asserts that community-engagement, partnership and civic leadership play an increasingly important role in addressing many of the major issues facing higher education today. Universities that provide structured, progressive, applied learning and research experiences to students (project-based learning, capstones, internships, employment) will be at an advantage in terms of student recruitment, retention, and graduation rates. Furthermore, universities with faculty and staff that excel at bridging theory and practice will produce graduates that are highly attractive to employers.

PSU has a large advantage in that it already has a well-developed community-engagement and partnership reputation. By implementing the following Topic Team Initiatives, PSU will further distinguish itself among urban-serving and regional comprehensive universities, secure additional resources, and provide a national model of the Engaged University.

- LifeCycle Engagement at PSU: Scale CBL Experiences for PSU Students and Faculty by Harnessing the Power of PSU Alumni
- Clear a Path for Community Connections: The PSU Partnership Portal
- Drive next generation scholarly agenda on "The Engaged University"
- Walk the Talk: Align university policies, procedures and administrative systems to advance community engagement and partnership agenda

I.   Situational Analysis (how well is PSU operating in the current environment)?

PSU enjoys a national reputation for community engagement, partnership and civic leadership. The institution is performing at a high level in the current environment creating rich learning, teaching, and research and service opportunities for students, faculty, and staff. PSU delivers value to partners ranging from individual elementary schools and non-profits to campus-level strategic partners such as PGE and OHSU.

PSU has grown dramatically in the past decade and so too have its engagement and partnership activities. Rapid expansion has created an engagement and partnership environment that is uneven, highly decentralized and person-dependent, creating challenges related to assessment, reporting, communications, and standardization. In addition, the absence of standardized data and communication tools and mechanisms to track this work makes it extremely difficult to understand, let alone assess, the totality of PSU's activity in these areas.

As more and more universities invest in and develop engagement and partnership strategies and structures, PSU must be intentional and strategic about this agenda, organizing itself and investing in ways that enable it to maintain a leadership position in this domain. The Topic Team believes that the scale and impact of PSU's partnership and engagement work could be advanced dramatically through targeted investment of financial and human resources. A more robust, expanded, coordinated and connected infrastructure (staffing, systems, data, policies, procedures, communications etc.) for engagement and partnership work could catapult and secure PSU's national prominence in this area. Focused strategy and goals related to the partnership and engagement agenda will insure that PSU maintains a leadership role among public, urban-serving universities.

The Topic Team adopted the PSU Partnership Council "Engagement and Partnership Spectrum" categories to conduct the Situational Analysis and develop Topic Team Initiatives. These categories are:

- Community-based Teaching and Learning
- Student Employment and Professional Application
- State and local Research, Sponsored Projects, and Service
- Strategic Partnerships – Campus-level Priority Business and Civic Partners

(See SWOT/Situational Analysis graphic on page 2)

Internal Strengths	Internal Challenges
- Fits campus cultural identity; broad commitment to agenda at departmental, college and administrative levels - Core to campus strategic values - Partnerships built into curriculum (Capstone) - Longstanding research and service relationships with local and state partners - Multiple PSU Institutes and Centers committed to and delivering this work - Deep experience linking knowledge to practice - Nationally recognized scholars in engagement - P&T allows for the scholarship of teaching and engagement - Robust faculty involvement - Hallmark of PSU's reputation – "Let Knowledge Serve the City" - Strategic Partnerships Office and Partnership Council established - Carnegie Classification secured	- Uneven engagement across departments - Internship opportunities (and administrative apparatus) to support are uneven - Uneven application/acceptance of P&T revisions - No standardized assessment process for CBL - Inconsistent IDC and routing process for research and sponsored projects – i.e. one-offs, run-arounds vs. standardization - Faculty and staff burnout (recreating wheel syndrome) - No clear "front door" for agenda/work - Increasing class size - Limited faculty learning communities to expand and initiate collaborative work - Nascent/undeveloped campus-wide, coordinating infrastructure and support - Limited interdisciplinary teaching and scholarship-beyond UNST - Online or distributed learning appears in conflict with place based courses - Disconnect between RSP and OAA/OAI re partnership agenda – esp. workforce development agenda
External Opportunities	**External Threats**
- National reputation; recognized for this work (awards) - Student and faculty recruitment opportunity - Institutionalize and scale relationships with regional employers from capstone to internship to employment – move beyond Capstone to create unique, applied-learning undergraduate experience - Fundraising opportunities with business community based on student touch-points and success - Many state, local and regional partnerships with results to claim credit for; build more systematic marketing efforts around partnership work - Brand university consistently re partnership and engagement agenda, work, opportunities, accomplishments; make this core component of PSU brand	- More universities claiming expertise in this domain (better resourced and organized) - University of Oregon moving into Portland to provide connections to employers and hands-on opportunities for students - No effective communication strategy about the power and impact of this work (need to claim/own this space through sophisticated communications) - No "front door" for this agenda results in frustration for community partners—university perceived as difficult to navigate by stakeholders and partners - Partnerships based on individual relationships does not lend itself to systematic reporting inhibiting consistent communications and impact statements

II. Introduction

➢ *What Trends in higher education are having the most significant impact on this topic?*

The headlines are filled today with stories about student debt, cost of college, return on investment in a college degree and the general value of a college education. Students are concerned about accruing debt and their ability to find good paying, career path jobs after graduation. Employers increasingly seek graduates with applied learning and work experience. Addressing student retention and graduation rates – especially at the community colleges and comprehensive state universities is another key issue facing higher education today. As the college population diversifies and more first generation students enter college, the need to provide culturally specific supports for student success is paramount.

The Topic Team asserts that community-engagement, partnership and civic leadership play an increasingly important role in addressing many of the major issues facing higher education today. Universities that provide structured, progressive, applied learning and research experiences to students (project-based learning, undergraduate research, capstones, internships, employment) will be at an advantage in terms of student recruitment, retention, and graduation rates. Furthermore, universities with faculty and staff that excel in this realm will produce graduates that are highly attractive to employers. PSU has a large advantage in that it already has a well-developed community-engagement and partnership reputation. The recommendations provided by the Topic Team can dramatically advance PSU's ability to provide applied learning, research and employment opportunities to students while simultaneously solving local, state and global challenges.

Specific higher education trends related to CEPCL Topic Team:

- Increased focus on the importance of university career centers and university role in supporting employability post-college.
  - Community-based learning, partnerships, and internships now viewed as essential pieces of professional growth of students.

- Governing boards, legislatures, large employers, and other stakeholders are playing a more significant role in higher education with a focus on outcomes.
  - These stakeholders understand and place a high value on the community engagement, partnership and internships as a tool for student learning and employability

- Role of universities as "anchor institutions" in a mobile world
  - Universities well positioned to play lead role in local and state research and service due to decline in business-civic leadership

- New pedagogy and credentialing aligned with applied learning

- o Credit for prior learning (CPL) and flexible pathways to graduation create opportunities for recognizing and assessing applied learning.
- o Flipped" classroom pedagogy -- widely used in technology-enhanced instruction – is a teaching strategy long used in community-based courses that leads to powerful learning outcomes bridging theory and practice.

- On-line or distributive learning challenges notions of place-based learning and has potentially negative consequences on partnership activities.

➢ *What are the most important considerations regarding this topic?*

Community engagement and partnership have emerged as critical components of university education for all of the reasons noted above. More and more universities across the country – and especially urban-serving universities – are asserting leadership in this area. PSU is and should continue to be a national leader -- both in practice and scholarship -- but this will require focused effort and targeted investment.

In 2014, the PSU Partnership Council was established to serve as a cross-campus hub for engagement and partnership work. The Council serves as a value-added, campus-level forum for identifying strategies to enhance the overall PSU climate for growing and sustaining community partnerships. This body should continue to serve as the central organizing mechanism charged with improving, assessing, reporting and communicating the value of PSU's engagement and partnership agenda.

III. Objective

➢ *How will we measure success? What end state do we want to achieve or move toward?*

PSU seeks to be at the cutting-edge of "city-university" engagement and partnership work nationally. While honoring the personal relationships upon which many partnerships are built, we seek to build campus infrastructure and support systems that lead to greater standardization and an ability to more readily assess and communicate the impact and value of this work. The end goal is to provide more consistent and better engagement and partnership opportunities to more faculty, staff, students and stakeholders.

IV. Initiatives

Initiative #1

LifeCycle Engagement at PSU: Scale CBL Experiences for PSU Students and Faculty by Harnessing the Power of PSU Alumni

This initiative seeks to scale and institutionalize a broader range of CBL experiences for students and faculty by harnessing the PSU alumni base in structured and consistent ways. PSU claims approximately 90,000 alumni in the metro region. These alumni are woefully underutilized from both an engagement and fundraising perspective.

This initiative begins in the classroom, where PSU has built a national reputation for high impact community based learning experiences. *LifeCycle Engagement* requires PSU to invest in professional development and infrastructure to expand community/civic engagement across the academic experience through more aggressive, structured and systematic relationships with PSU's alumni network. The goal is to fully engage PSU alumni (and the employers, agencies and organizations they represent) in meaningful relationships with students ranging from Capstones, to internships to employment.

The well established Capstone program provides an important centerpiece to this initiative, but expanding beyond the Capstone to more consistently offer community based learning, co-curricular engagement, community-engaged research, and internship experiences across all levels of a PSU student's educational career will contribute to powerful learning for students, and more community-engaged research and service opportunities for faculty.

Through *LifeCycle Engagement*, students enter PSU knowing they will have the opportunity to apply their knowledge to non-theoretical problems throughout their PSU experience. In addition to academic learning, PSU students hone applied skills, build networks, and prepare for employment. Upon joining the workforce and the alumni base, they are immediately encouraged to continue engagement with PSU by sharing their networks and resources as mentors, research partners, internship sponsors and donors.

LifeCycle Engagement will differentiate PSU and its graduates in a competitive higher ed marketplace. PSU grads will conclude their academic experience with strong intellectual and real world professional skills as well as an established set of professional contacts cultivated through alumni partnership activities. The potential outcomes of this initiative are increased enrollments, new partnerships and coalitions focused on community problem solving and a fully realized alumni engagement strategy that inspires new levels of support.

✓ *What are the resource implications?*

This initiative will require an investment in infrastructure ('scaffolding") to expand community and civic engagement across the academic experience. It will also require investments of intellectual resources to develop and institutionalize a new and expanded alumni engagement strategy.

The potential financial return on investment in LifeCycle Engagement is significant. This initiative will:

- Strengthen existing partnerships and build new coalitions with the community and our alumni that will help PSU gain support for a local option funding initiative.
- Excite and inspire funders. We know that donors want to see their money go to support tangible benefits; not just for the individual student but for the community as a whole.
- Excite and motivate our political supporters, who may see a state supported internship program --particularly one focused on underrepresented minority students-- as a sound investment towards improving job prospects for college graduates who are then in a better position to contribute to Oregon's tax base.

✓ *What are the interdependencies with other topic teams?*

Given its cross cutting nature, the Life Cycle of Engagement initiative touches aspects of all the Topic Teams. However, the ones it most closely aligns with are probably Student Learning and Academic Success and Organizational Excellence and Financial Stability

✓ *What are the trade-offs? What should we stop doing?*

The Life Cycle Engagement initiative will help mitigate the current need for "one-off" engagement strategies based largely on individual relationships. It should also reduce duplication of efforts by individual units to provide CBL, co-curricular and internship opportunities. Scaling CBL efforts will require a greater degree of centralization and standardization and ultimately should lead to lower cost and higher impact.

We will "trade-off" a sub-optimal alumni engagement strategy for one that better integrates alumni in ways that support their professional and personal goals advance university educational and financial goals.

Initiative #2:

Clearing a Path for Community Connections: The PSU Partnership Portal

Claiming national leadership in engagement and partnerships requires powerful communications and a clear, reliable path to make connections. Today, it is difficult to "see" of "find" PSU's engagement and partnership agenda.

PSU needs a "front door" to the engagement and partnership agenda that organizes, communicates, and displays the work in ways that are both intuitive and easy to navigate. The Front Door will take the form of an electronic portal. The portal will organize and present PSU capabilities and programming to enable external stakeholders, students, and faculty to quickly and easily identify who and what they need to pursue applied learning and research opportunities and partnership activities. The portal will link community organizations, government agencies, employers and individuals with appropriate university resources enabling increasingly democratic and systematic partnerships – i.e. not exclusively relationship/person dependent.

Investment in a "Front Door" resource for engagement and partnership will:
- Facilitate efficient matchmaking between students, faculty and community partners
- Cohere the agenda and enforce the brand (see LifeCycle Engagement)
- Enable powerful communications and storytelling
- Engage PSU alumni
- Mobilize donor investment (enables donors to quickly find and see impact and results)
- Collect and report data/impact of engagement and partnership agenda
- Contribute to increased political, financial and cultural support of the institution

✓ *What are the resource implications?*

This initiative will require an upfront investment in web design as well as ongoing maintenance and support. The "front door" will only work with a dedicated staff person able to assist community partners, alumni, faculty, and students navigate the system. This individual will need to develop systems and tutorials to guide the robust development of the tool.

✓ *What are the interdependencies with other topic teams?*

Student Learning and Academic Success; Innovative Research, Scholarship and Creative Activities; Global Excellence; Faculty Roles and Structure

✓ *What are the trade-offs? What should we stop doing?*

We should stop telling our engagement and partnership story in ad-hoc and anecdotal ways. There shouldn't be a trade-off between strong relationships and

greater institutionalization. Better data and more centralized capacity for communications should enhance the agenda at every level.

Initiative #3:

Drive next generation scholarly agenda on "The Engaged University"

PSU strives to be a leader in both the *practice and scholarship of engagement*. Building from its strong base of practical experience and faculty expertise, PSU will create a dynamic, learning hub that advances the field of university-community engagement and partnership. PSU is uniquely positioned to lead in this area. We are already viewed as a "thought and practice" leader in this space. As more and more universities seek to bolster their engagement and partnership agendas, PSU can serve as a national leader through journals, publications, conferences, and consultation.

PSU's deep experience in engagement and partnership can be further developed and mined to inform the next generation of work in this arena. The audience for this work is urban-serving and regional, comprehensive universities serving non-traditional student bodies – i.e. first gen, older adults, veterans, low-income students etc. A central focus of the learning hub is documenting how CBL improves outcomes for students in terms of learning, retention and post-graduate success. This body of scholarship also seeks to understand the ways that partnerships respond to and address community concerns.

The creation of an intentional, PSU learning hub for faculty will focus on theory-building and testing -- identifying best and promising practices, and creating a community of scholarship concerned with how this work can be delivered and scaled most effectively for the betterment of universities (e.g., students, faculty, staff), partners, and the broader communities in which they are located or with which they engage. The learning hub would include data collection, research and analysis, reflection, and academic writing.

     ✓ *What are the resource implications?*

Creating this hub would involve acquiring resources to support theory building, empirical research, reflection, knowledge dissemination, hosting and attending national conferences and operation of a high quality, on-line journal focused upon community-university engagement.

     ✓ *What are the interdependencies with other topic teams?*

Innovation Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity; Student Learning and Academic Success; Equity, Opportunity and Access.

     ✓ *What are the trade-offs? What should we stop doing?*

We should build from the existing strengths of University Studies and the Office of Academic Innovation. We should eliminate the "silo" mentality at PSU and recognize that PSU's academic mission and community engagement, partnership and workforce development must be viewed and worked on holistically.

Initiative #4

Walk the Talk: Align university policies, procedures and administrative systems with goals of community engagement and partnership agenda

Most university policies, practices and administrative systems were designed to provide efficiency mechanisms to support work internal to the campus. In order to strengthen PSU's capacity to engage in effective community partnerships, the PSU Partnership Council will create a Task Force on Administrative Policies and Support Practices for Community Partnerships. This task force—to be composed of an appropriate balance of administrative experts, university partnership practitioners, and community partners — will identify policies, practices and procedures that enable or discourage faculty from engaging in community-based research and partnership work, impinge upon the capacity to form effective and timely partnerships and explore modifications and alternatives; identify best practices across campus and at other institutions regarding support mechanisms for creating, tracking, and evaluating community partnerships; and make recommendations for changes and innovations that can simplify and make community partnership-building more effective while at the same time appropriately maintain campus fiduciary responsibilities.

✓ *What are the resource implications?*

Time commitment by administrative professionals and partnership practitioners will be required. The findings of the Task Force will likely require further resource commitment to build out the support mechanisms identified. Data collection at the student- and partner-level coupled with analysis will be required in terms of tracking the level of community engagement in areas such as internship placement, grants and contracts. The latter capability will necessitate further cooperation with OIRP to flesh out community-engaged research and sponsored projects and their indirect cost contributions.

✓ *What are the interdependencies with other topic teams?*

This area can serve as an integrator across the other topics.

✓ *What are the trade-offs? What should we stop doing?*

Because there are no major resource implications at the outset, and because the Task Force is a one-time initiative, there are no significant tradeoffs with which to be concerned. However, the subsequent recommendations will require resource commitment for system development and integration. Future payoffs in terms of more

informed grant applications, lead generation and fundraising for PSU's development function are anticipated to contribute resources.

Initial Equity Concerns

Community engagement and partnerships represent a critical means through which we bring diversity to PSU, embrace diversity and inclusion, and share our own capacity to advance racial equity and social justice with community partners. For this reason, it is critical that in moving the initiatives of this topic team forward that we:

- Recognize, appreciate and obtain representation of diverse community partners when planning, implementing and evaluating community partnerships.

- Recognize that all learning and partnerships are multi-dimensional; the university and its members are teachers and learners, collaborative planners, partnership builders and actors, and collaborative evaluators.

  - Specific to Initiative #4: the Task Force on Administrative Policies Related to Community Partnerships should include a diverse set of community partners including those who are or represent traditionally marginalized
  - Specific to Initiative #3: the PSU Learning Hub on Community Engagement and Partnership should specifically address the issue of how community-engaged learning and research addresses student learning and retention for low-income and first generation students.

- Fixed term and adjunct faculty are doing much of the engagement work with respect to curriculum

- Students from marginalized communities might need different experiences than what our courses have provided previously

- Small community organizations need additional support to effectively access campus resources as well as work with our students and faculty.