Academic Engagement Ad Hoc Committee Meeting

2/17/2016

MINUTES

Members present: Dustin Benham (Law), Jaclyn Canas (Arts & Sciences), Jessica Carrillo (Business), Claudia Cogliser (Graduate School), Kelley Coleman (International Affairs), Pat DeLucia (VPR), Gary Elbow (Honors College), Jerod Foster (Media & Communications), Paul Frazier (Diversity, Equity, and Community Engagement), Laura Heinz (Libraries), Jacqueline Henninger (Visual & Performing Arts), Robin Lock (Education), Scott Longing (CASNR), Justin Louder (eLearning), Steven Maxner (Vietnam Center), Gary Morgan (Museum), Craig Morton (OPA), Venki Uddameri (Engineering), Andrew Vernooy (Architecture).

Members absent: Sara Dodd (Human Sciences)

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. Dr. Munoz provided the welcome followed by introductions. He then presented the formal charge to the committee and outlined the committee’s role in advising the institution on its strategic outreach and engagement priorities.

Dr. Green provided an overview of engagement at Texas Tech highlighting the institution’s ten-year history of being a Carnegie classified Community Engaged institution. Green stressed the institution’s continued commitment to Community Engagement as a strategic priority. She noted the creation of the Office of Academic Engagement under the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Student Affairs, which will be dedicated to promoting faculty, staff, and student engagement in the following ways:

- Increasing the campus-wide understanding of academic engagement and outreach;
- Promoting best practices in academic engagement and outreach;
- Increasing internal and external visibility and recognitions for academic engagement;
- Improving campus-wide communication and coordination of academic engagement;
- Establishing new areas of institutional excellence in academic engagement.

Green then highlighted the initiatives that had already been undertaken during the fall ’15 semester in support of these goals: 1) the 2015 annual assessment of faculty and staff engagement and outreach via the Raiders Engaged online survey was administered; 2) a new website designed to provide comprehensive access to Texas Tech’s outreach and engagement programs and initiatives (the site is currently housed under the Provost’s website at http://www.depts.ttu.edu/provost/outreach-engagement/index.php); and 3) an inaugural online newsletter was published to inform the campus about current programs and initiatives and news items related to academic engagement at Texas Tech.
For the remainder of the 2016 calendar year, Green outlined the following objectives:

- Establishing a clearer framework for faculty engagement work including terminology and definitions for academic engagement work.
- Development of an annual awards and recognition program for TTU faculty, staff, students, and community partners;
- Optimization of the annual *Raiders Engaged* assessment of faculty and staff engagement and outreach;
- Development of internal and external communications regarding academic engagement;
- Identification of needs for campus-wide resources and incentives for academic engagement.

Green next invited Craig Morton from the Office of Planning and Assessment to provide an overview of Texas Tech’s current assessment of faculty and staff engagement work via the *Raiders Engaged* instrument. Morton noted that the instrument was originally adapted from Michigan State University’s Outreach and Engagement Instrument (OEMI), a pioneer in this area, and that Texas Tech administered it for the first time in 2009. Since then, the assessment had been conducted on an annual basis and data collected had been used for reporting against Texas Tech’s Strategic Plan Priority 4 “Further Outreach and Engagement.” Over the years, adjustments and improvements had been made to the instrument based on feedback from respondents resulting in the current version of *Raiders Engaged*.

Morton then shared the results from the 2015 administration of *Raiders Engaged* highlighting the type of data that *Raiders Engaged* currently collects from faculty and staff about their engagement work. He noted that the 2015 assessment was very effective, with no glitches in the data collection. Green added that further streamlining and improvements of the instrument are planned to encourage participation by faculty and staff and enhance its value to academic departments, administrators, as well as community partners.

Green noted that Raiders Engaged database will also become accessible to the campus and the general public via the new Outreach and Engagement website and will be searchable by keyword. This would allow faculty, for instance, to identify potential project partners or the general public to search for programs or activities of interest. Features will also enable various report formats based on administrative needs. Morton reiterated the importance of the data collection for annual reporting against Texas Tech’s Strategic Plan goals under Strategic Priority 4 “Further Outreach and Engagement.”
Committee members asked for clarification on the types of activities that would count towards academic engagement. Much discussion evolved around faculty “consulting work” and whether it would or should count as engagement. Green explained that this would depend on the situation, whether the consulting work was conducted as part of a departmental activity (versus individual activity), involved external partners, and was conducted to address a specific community need or societal issue. She clarified that engagement in its purest sense is based on reciprocal, mutually beneficial relationships between faculty and external partners, meaning that the relationship involved exchange of existing knowledge and creation of new knowledge on both sides.

Green then shared with the committee the Carnegie Foundation’s Definition of Community Engagement which Texas Tech is currently using to define its activities. She reiterated the goal of the ad hoc committee to help Texas Tech further clarify and define what types of activities should be considered and counted as academic engagement. The committee noted that an important distinction of engagement compared to traditional faculty work could be “with whom” and “for whom” a particular activity was conducted, basing the distinction on the types of partners involved, intent of the collaboration, and resulting impacts. Committee members still felt that it was difficult to discern, for instance, traditional research from “Engaged Research” and recommended that a clearer definition be given and distinctions made between traditional faculty work and engagement work, as well as specific examples provided.

Several committee members added that many faculty members do not complete the Raiders Engaged survey, not knowing its exact purpose and importance to the institution, in particular as it relates to the Strategic Plan. One member added that it was not commonly known that actual annual target numbers for engagement had been set by the administration in the Strategic Plan. It was suggested that administrators and faculty should be educated about the intent of the survey and its importance to strategic planning.

Overall, the committee made the following recommendations with respect to defining and assessing engagement at Texas Tech:

2. Meet with chairs and discuss engagement as a strategic priority.
3. Provide an overview of engagement at faculty meetings and outline the strategic plan goals and targets related to engagement.
4. Follow the annual administration of Raiders Engaged up with a campus-wide communication (e-mail or brief summary report) that shares the survey results and compares them to the original targets/goals of the Strategic Plan.
5. Make clear to faculty that reported data will count and go into Digital Measures.
The meeting adjourned at 10:00 a.m. Additional discussions were tabled until the next committee meeting which is scheduled for Tuesday, March 22, from 2:30 – 3:30 p.m. Dr. Green invited committee members to share, in the meantime, any additional thoughts related to the discussions via e-mail.

02/24/16
BG

Attachments:
2015 Raiders Engaged Definitions and Forms of Engagement
2015 Raiders Engaged Survey Questions