

Supporting University-Community Partnerships through Shared Governance and Assessment

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Abstract

University-community partnerships have always been an important part of Towson University's mission and charge as an anchor institution in the Baltimore metropolitan region. After the recent unrest in Baltimore, these partnerships are more important than ever. This paper will explore Towson's institutional partnership governance and new partnership support system, as well as how both helped the university respond after the riots in Baltimore City. The future of partnerships at Towson University will also be discussed.

Partnerships and relationships with the community are a major part of many universities' missions and strategic plans, though that has not always been the case. As Martin, Smith, and Phillips note, "historically, partnerships between universities and community organizations have either been non-existent or unconstructive; this state of affairs being the result of opposing philosophies and practices," (2005, 2). They go on to note that despite this, the last ten years has seen an increase in the number and scope of university-community partnerships (Martin, Smith, and Phillips 2005).

This renaissance is likely due in part to the Kellogg Commission Report, *Returning to Our Roots: The Engaged Institution*. This report calls on public and land-grant institutions "to go beyond outreach and service to what the Kellogg Commission defines as 'engagement.' By engagement, we refer to institutions that have redesigned their teaching, research, and extension and service functions to become even more sympathetically and productively involved with their communities..." (Kellogg 1999, 9). The Kellogg Commission notes that universities and communities should work together to address social and economic concerns (1999).

Since that report, others have echoed the importance of university-community partnerships in tackling the "wicked problems" of today. Rittel and Webber state that "now that these relatively easy problems have been dealt with, we have been turning our attention to others that are much more stubborn," (1973, 156). They say, of the term wicked problems, "We use the term 'wicked' in a meaning akin to that of 'malignant' (in contrast to 'benign') or 'vicious' (like a circle) or 'tricky' (like a leprechaun) or 'aggressive' (like a lion, in contrast to the docility of a lamb)," (1973, 160). They go on to state that the characteristics of wicked problems are difficult to define and that the problems themselves are difficult to solve (Rittel and Webber 1973). There are several ways to approach these problems, however, and many possible solutions.

Judith Ramaley writes that higher education is approaching these wicked problems, saying, “The role of higher education is changing in today’s world because the world itself is changing, and complex problems confront us daily,” (2014, 7). She outlines an approach to addressing wicked problems that includes various disciplines, greater collaboration, and the involvement of new people who can bring fresh perspectives (Ramaley 2014). Ramaley also says, “The university must create new forms of infrastructure to support and sustain these new working relationships while encouraging faculty and students to seek out integrative and collaborative opportunities that address today’s complex problems,” (2014, 18).

Martin, Smith, and Phillips advocate moving toward a governance approach that involves the community to solve problems and uses new tools to achieve success (2005). Bringle and Hatcher also note how imperative it is to develop campus-community partnerships to address critical issues in the community (2002). These partnerships can “grow out of crises (e.g., natural disaster), be arranged through third parties (e.g., city government connects the campus and a community organization to work on a project), or occur through coincidence (e.g., both parties attend a meeting with a common interest),” (Bringle and Hatcher 2002, 506).

Morrell, Sorensen, and Howarth note that finding solutions to wicked problems works best if representatives from the university and the community work together to identify contributing factors and propose solutions (2015). Partnerships aimed at helping to address these problems should be action-oriented, as well as research-oriented (Morrell, Sorensen, and Howarth 2015).

Towson University (TU) understands the importance of university-community partnerships as well as anyone. TU was founded as the Maryland State Normal School, a teacher’s college, and partnerships have been an integral part of its mission and charge as an anchor institution in the Baltimore metropolitan region ever since. TU recognizes that as a public university, major employer, and economic driver, it is our duty and responsibility to be truly connected and responsive to our community. After the recent unrest in Baltimore in April 2015, this responsibility became even greater.

Background

The sense of duty and the realization that Towson could play a critical role in tackling pressing issues led the late President Maravene Loeschke to call for a more standardized way of tracking and evaluating the institution’s partnerships. Prior to this, partnerships were being measured haphazardly, and faculty and staff were often asked for the same information from several different offices which caused frustration and pushback. This led to faculty and staff members feeling as though the information was not being used effectively and that their time providing this information was not valued.

Different types of partnerships were also (and still are) managed by different offices. The Office of Civic Engagement and Leadership focuses on service-learning, civic engagement, leadership, and sustainability initiatives. The Office of Community

Service organizes and manages community service opportunities for students on campus. The Office of Partnerships and Outreach works to connect community members with university resources, while also leading assessment efforts. This decentralized approach meant that each office was not always aware of what the others were doing, which meant that the university did not have a good grasp on what partnerships were happening, who was participating, what organizations faculty and staff were working with, the number of students involved, etc.

Under this charge, the university developed definitions for university-community partnerships and relationships, as well as a system of evaluation and support for faculty and staff members leading these partnerships and relationships. These new mechanisms have already helped TU quickly pull information about the institution's work in Baltimore City to provide to the governor's office and the University System of Maryland.

Defining University-Community Partnerships and Relationships for Towson University

In order to determine the best way to manage and support partnerships and relationships at Towson University, it was important to understand the role of partnerships, how they are defined, and the guiding principles behind them. Towson's mission statement highlights outreach to businesses, nonprofits, government agencies, schools, and health care organizations, while also emphasizing the role of applied research, community service, and student experiences outside of the classroom – characteristics found in the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement for which the university has received recognition (in 2008 and 2015).

Towson University's current strategic plan, "TU 2020: A Focused Vision for Towson University," also emphasizes university-community partnerships and relationships. One of its main underlying principles is community outreach. There are ten priorities for the institution, several of which are focused on partnership activities:

- Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Applied Research,
- Internships and Experiential Learning Opportunities,
- A Model for Leadership Development, and
- Student, Faculty, and Staff Well-Being.

To build on the charge laid out in the mission statement and strategic plan, the university worked to define what university-community partnerships and relationships are and what they mean to Towson University. The working definition of partnerships that is used by the institution states, "Partnerships at Towson University focus on the collaboration and exchange of knowledge, expertise, and resources. Our partnerships support the mission of the university, enhance the student learning experience, and are central to our identity as a community-engaged institution." Relationships, though they still include a university entity and an external organization, differ from partnerships in that they likely have a single purpose or goal and are often one-way. This distinction is

important because partnerships, in contrast to relationships, require more and different kinds of support from the university.

Towson highly values these relationships and partnerships and purposely seeks out relationships and partnerships that enhance student learning and the research and scholarship of our faculty, while dually having a positive impact on the education, economic vitality, and social well-being of our community.

Within these university-community partnerships and relationships are community engagement activities, community outreach activities, or both. TU adheres to the Carnegie Foundation definition of community engagement, which says, “Community engagement describes the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources,” (Carnegie 2012). The university’s definition for community outreach states, “Community outreach describes services that are carried out by the University for/in the community, rather than with the community.”

Institutional Partnership Governance

To understand how partnerships are currently managed at Towson, an explanation of the institutional governance structure must be provided. Figure 1 shows an overview of the primary offices involved in managing community engagement partnerships and work.

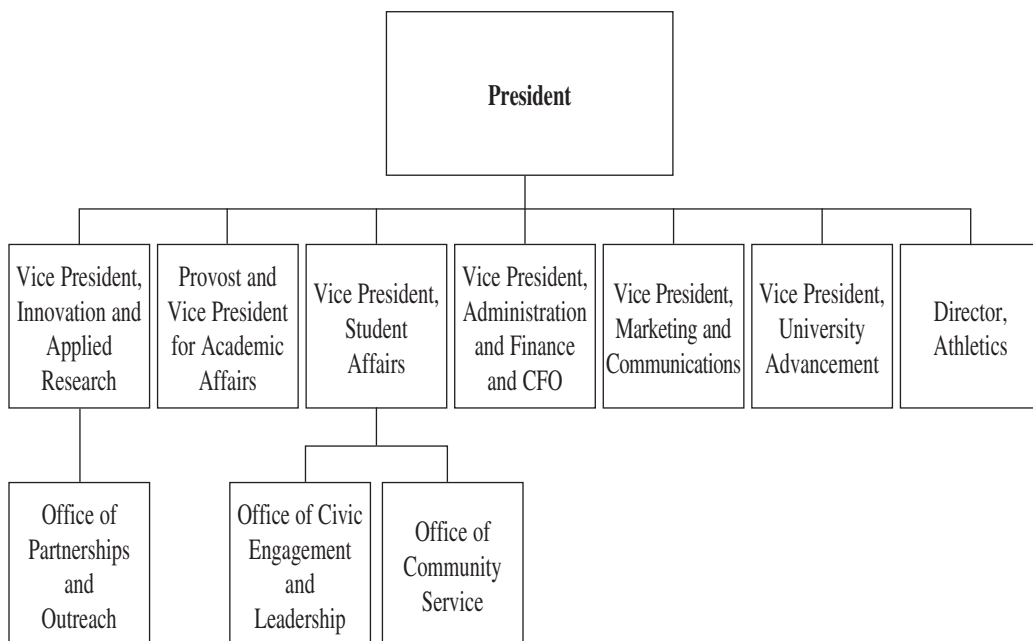
TU intentionally applies a decentralized strategy to support partnerships across campus. Community engagement and partnerships are encouraged and supported by individual deans and vice presidents, but there are offices that were created to specifically manage and support different types of partnership work.

The Office of Partnerships and Outreach, in the Division of Innovation and Applied Research, was created to strengthen the ties between the university and community by supporting partnerships and serving as a point of contact for the community. This office has been allocated two full-time staff members and a student employee whose work is directly related to supporting partnerships.

The Office of Civic Engagement and Leadership is in the Division of Student Affairs. Its responsibilities are in the areas of political engagement, environmental/sustainability initiatives, and service-learning. There are three full-time staff members and numerous student interns and graduate assistants in this office.

The Office of Community Service within the student activities area of the Division of Student Affairs focuses on identifying and organizing community service opportunities for TU students. Community service has a full-time coordinator, as well as a graduate assistant.

Figure 1. Organizational Structure – Partnership Management



In addition to the aforementioned structures, a Partnership Working Group was formed in fall 2014 at the behest of the President’s Council. This group is made up of fifteen individuals from across campus, representing every academic college and administrative division. This group has three main purposes:

1. Identify potential partnerships for consideration as university signature partnerships
2. Review current partnerships across campus in order to identify opportunities to expand them or to connect them with other projects to create more extensive and expansive partnerships
3. Review and evaluate approved university signature partnerships to ensure that progress is being made, that goals are being met, and that new goals are being set at specified intervals

The Partnership Working Group serves, in general, as a support and governing body for university-community partnerships. Since there are members from all areas of campus, this group is able to identify where information is missing, where gaps exist, and what faculty and staff members may need in terms of support. The Partnership Working Group also serves as a forum to discuss questions that arise from campus regarding partnerships.

Towson University-Community Relationships and Partnerships Support System

Getting to the point of developing and implementing a stronger support system for university-community partnerships has been a natural build for Towson University. Towson earned the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement and Outreach in both 2008 and 2015. Improvement areas were identified by the Carnegie Foundation and included tracking and assessment of partnerships.

To prepare for the 2015 re-application, a Carnegie Taskforce and Evaluation Subgroup were created to assess Towson's status with regards to evaluation of partnerships and what improvements could be made. These groups collected information from across campus about what faculty, staff, and students were doing and how different offices and units were measuring and assessing these activities. These groups were a precursor to the Partnership Working Group. They were larger, to encourage more input from many different areas on campus. The Partnership Working Group, in contrast, was convened as a smaller, more focused group.

The university president, seeing that there were deficiencies in how the institution was tracking and assessing partnerships, called for one centralized data collection and support system. Using a tool that was developed by the Carnegie Evaluation Subgroup, baseline data about partnerships happening across the university were collected in spring 2014. The data revealed a number of partnerships that were not previously visible, further highlighting the need for a new system. The Partnership Working Group was then convened in fall 2014 to further address some of the issues and challenges that the university faced regarding partnerships.

The working group spent six months developing a support system for university-community partnerships. The purposes of the system are to enhance the recognition of faculty- and staff-led partnerships, identify Towson's partnerships and relationships, determine their scope, coordinate campus resources, and evaluate impacts and outcomes.

The Partnership Working Group reviewed the baseline data about TU's partnerships to determine what partnerships were happening, what their characteristics were, and how they were currently being supported by the institution. From that information, the group recognized that there are different types of partnerships that range in size, scope, and purpose and that different types of partnerships require different levels and types of support. The purpose of defining different types of partnerships and relationships is not to place value on one type over another, but rather to group similar partnerships and relationships together in order to systematically determine how best to support them.

The group outlined four types of partnerships, their characteristics, evaluation expectations, and the support that is needed for each type. A full chart of the partnership types appears below in Figure 2.

It was important to the group to recognize both partnerships, as well as relationships. Many activities done by faculty and staff fall into the “relationship” category, meaning that they may not be as robust as partnerships and may be more one-way, such as a community service project or working on a contract basis with an organization. However, the group felt that these interactions were just as important to collect information about and that to leave out relationships would be to ignore a whole set of partners and range of activities that are still central to the mission of the university.

Figure 2. Partnership and Relationship Types

Type	Characteristics	Information Collected and Evaluation Expectations	Support Provided
Early Stage Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An Early Stage Collaboration is an idea, conversation, or developing concept for a new community outreach relationship or partnership. The faculty or staff member may already be informally working with a community partner in hopes of developing a more defined relationship or partnership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As an Early Stage Collaboration is developed, basic information is collected from the lead such as the number of people involved (students, faculty, staff, external), the desired partnering organization, and the general purpose and goals of the eventual partnership or relationship. This information will be stored offline. Once the idea has progressed to a community outreach relationship or community engagement partnership, it will be added to the Community Partnerships Database. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying additional potential collaborators both on and off campus Resources for how to get the partnership off the ground

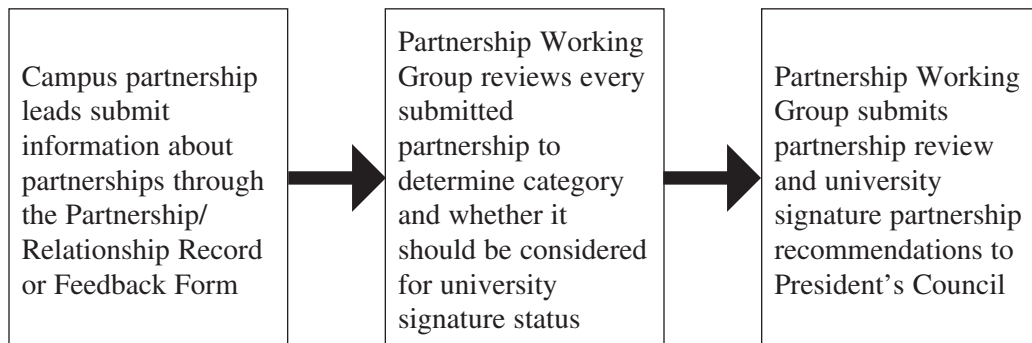
Community Outreach Relationship	<p>Partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship between a university entity (department, division, individual faculty or staff member) and an external organization in business, government, nonprofit, education, or the community. <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most likely has a single purpose or goal, including but not limited to grants, contracts, research, community service, or service-learning, internships. • May or may not directly involve students. <p>Timeframe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be a limited amount of time or more sustainable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As new relationship is formed, basic information is collected through the Community Partnerships Database, such as number of people involved (students, faculty, staff, external), who the partnering organization is, timeframe, and the general purpose of the relationship. • Annually submit outcomes and impacts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying additional potential collaborators both on and off campus • Raising awareness of the relationship both internally and externally • Assistance with reporting the outcomes of the relationship
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Community Engagement Partnership	<p>Partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership between a university entity (department, division, individual faculty or staff member) and an external organization in business, government, nonprofit, education, or the community. <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be for a singular purpose or goal or have multiple goals/ purposes and addresses student learning outcomes. • There is mutuality and reciprocity among all partners. <p>Timeframe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timeframe will be determined based on the purpose and goals of the partnership and may range from one semester to several years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once a new partnership is formed, information about the partnership will be collected through the Community Partnerships Database, such as number of people involved (students, faculty, staff, external), who the partnering organization is, timeframe, general purpose of the relationship, intended impacts and outcomes, and the intended student learning outcomes. • In order to ensure clear goals and roles within the partnership, a written agreement between the partners is recommended. • Annually submit outcomes and impacts • Feedback from community partners will be collected annually to determine their perceptions on the partnership and how it is progressing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying additional potential collaborators both on and off campus • Raising awareness of the partnership both internally and externally. • Assistance with reporting the outcomes and impacts of the partnership. • Review of partnership goals and progress • Inclusion in events and publications such as annual reports and the TU Showcase. • Partnership information is collected and compiled into an annual report for the personal and professional use by the faculty and staff members involved.
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University Signature Partnership	<p>Partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership is formed between the university (including stakeholders from more than one unit, department, college, or division) and one or more external organizations in business, government, nonprofit, education, or the community <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership has multiple goals/ purposes and addresses student learning outcomes. • There is mutuality and reciprocity among all partners. • Partnership includes many types of activities, including community engagement and community outreach. • Partnership may bring together several existing relationships and partnerships. • Partnership strives to be a replicable model regionally, nationally, and/or internationally. <p>Timeframe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership is long-term and sustainable over time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once a new university signature partnership is formed, information about the partnership will be collected through the Community Partnerships Database, such as number of people involved (students, faculty, staff, external), who the partnering organization is, timeframe, general purpose of the relationship, intended impacts and outcomes, and the intended student learning outcomes • Partnership must include a written memorandum of understanding of each partner’s goals and expectations • Annually submit outcomes and impacts • Feedback from community partners will be collected annually to determine their perceptions on the partnership and how it is progressing • These partnerships will be presented to the vice presidents of the university, along with an in-depth review of goals related to the partnership, in order to update them on progress and alignment with university priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying additional potential collaborators both on and off campus • Raising awareness of the partnership both internally and externally • Assistance with reporting the outcomes and impacts of the partnership • Review of partnership goals and progress. • Partnership information collected and compiled into an annual report for the personal and professional use by the faculty and staff members involved. • Inclusion in events and publications such as annual reports and the TU Showcase. • Partnership centrally supported by the Office of Partnerships and Outreach and the Partnership Working Group.
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The system was approved by the vice presidents in February 2015. The workflow of the Partnership Working Group with regards to this new system and how the group relates to the President’s Council is represented in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Partnership Working Group Workflow



The new system of defining partnerships was then introduced to the campus in a variety of ways. Targeted presentations were given to the councils of each academic college as well as the leadership teams of each administrative division. These presentations outlined the background of partnerships at Towson, how the system will help faculty and staff members with their own partnerships, and what the future of partnerships at the university looks like. Communication was also sent via email and TU’s daily newsletter, which is sent to the entire campus.

Assessing and Supporting Partnerships

Along with the system which outlines partnership types, the role of the Partnership Working Group, and how partnerships will be supported, the working group developed assessment tools. The assessment tools were created from the baseline partnership survey, using many of the same questions with some changes based on feedback from the campus. Two surveys were created – a Partnership/Relationship Record Form and a Partnership/Relationship Feedback Form. The record form is filled out by faculty and staff members who are either starting a new partnership/relationship or who have not previously provided information about their partnership or relationship. The feedback form is an annual evaluation that is used to collect updated information about each partnership or relationship from the past year. The forms are currently administered through an online survey system which is maintained by the Office of Partnerships and Outreach and then analyzed by the Partnership Working Group. Both forms are used for relationships and for partnerships.

The record form is intended to be the more static information about a relationship or partnership and is completed only once. Data collected through this form include who the partners are, the impact areas, what the intended outcomes are, and what the student learning goals are. The feedback form is administered annually and includes information such as the actual outcomes of the partnership or relationship, how many

hours were dedicated to it, how many students were involved, and questions about how the individuals felt about their experiences in the past year.

The main goal of the data collection process is to evaluate impacts and outcomes. In the record form, the individual providing information is asked to identify the impact areas of the partnership or relationship from a pre-set list. Since the list is pre-set, there may be instances where a faculty or staff member may not be able to perfectly match impacts, and in such instances, there is an option for the individual to specify the unique impacts of the partnership or relationship being recorded. In addition to measuring impacts, faculty and staff members are asked annually to choose the outcomes of their partnership or relationship from a pre-set list and to provide more in-depth detail about those partnerships or relationships. Again, this list is not exhaustive, so there may not always be an exact match for the faculty or staff member to choose, but he or she can always specify their own outcomes and explain them in detail in the next question.

The surveys are completed by the partnership or relationship lead. In the last collection cycle, the university received information about 169 partnerships and relationships. Information will continue to be collected annually.

This system has already helped to provide assessment and support for partnerships across the university. One of these partnerships is the Northern Map Turtle Partnership that Towson has with the Town of Port Deposit in Cecil County, Maryland. This partnership, which has existed for over seven years, focuses on four main areas: conservation, education, research, and economic development. It brings together resources and expertise to support the conservation of the Northern Map Turtle, a state endangered species, and in doing so, to improve the economic vitality of the community, provide experiential opportunities for TU students, and promote eco-tourism.

The Northern Map Turtle Partnership started with a TU biology professor's research on the Northern Map Turtle in 2008. In 2012, the professor wanted to get other areas of the university involved in the partnership with Port Deposit in order to address additional challenges and opportunities in the town. The Office of Partnerships and Outreach met with him and the town to determine these needs and the best way to move forward.

A memorandum of understanding was drafted and signed by both the town and the university. Since then, the partnership has grown tremendously. It now includes several departments and areas on campus, including Creative Services, Art Services, the Department of Marketing, and the College of Business and Economics. The town is also renovating the Jacob Tome Gas House, which will include a visitor's center on the first floor and lab space for Towson on the second floor.

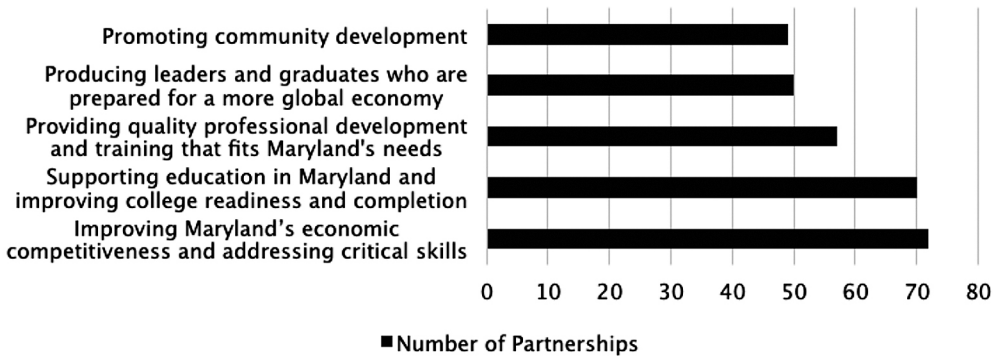
The Northern Map Turtle Partnership is a great example of a campus-wide partnership that has been supported by the structures and systems of Towson University. The Office of Partnerships and Outreach acts as the administrative contact for the partnership so that the faculty member can focus on his research and the students he works with. The partnership, like all others, is evaluated annually to determine outcomes, challenges in the past year, student involvement, and more. This information helps those involved in the partnership to see what the current needs are and how it can grow in the next year. The support system can also help the university determine what types of support could benefit the Northern Map Turtle Partnership.

Partnerships Today

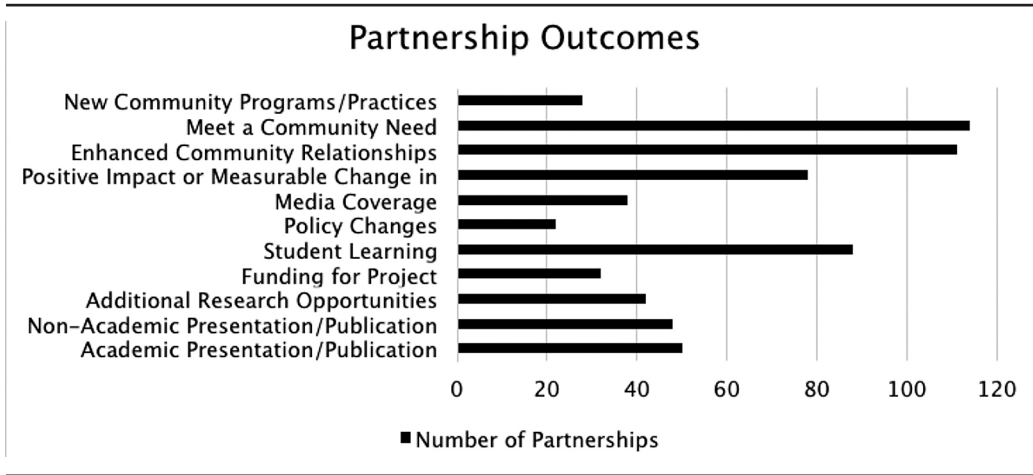
The data collection period for 2015 was held between May and July. During that time, faculty and staff members submitted information about 169 partnerships and relationships, compared with 97 partnerships and relationships submitted in 2014. Eighty-five percent of these partnerships and relationships directly made a difference for the citizens of central Maryland. The information presented below includes both partnerships and relationships combined together.

These partnerships and relationships came from all academic colleges and administrative divisions and had a variety of impact areas and outcomes. The most common impact areas were:

Most Commonly Identified Impact Areas



These partnerships and relationships had a variety of outcomes, the breakdown of which are below:



Baltimore City Case Study

In the midst of the 2015 data collection, riots occurred in Baltimore in response to the death of Freddie Gray while he was in police custody. The unrest left certain areas of Baltimore in ruin, with the west side of the city being hit the hardest. Buildings were burned, stores were looted, and there was, in general, a great deal of destruction in those neighborhoods.

Governor Larry Hogan’s office and the University System of Maryland (USM), seeing this violence and destruction, wanted to discern what USM schools in and around Baltimore were already doing in the city. This would help them see what types of programs are already happening and how institutions may be able to work together to expand the reach of these partnerships.

Towson was wrapping up its partnership evaluation period, so it was the perfect time to collect information about partnerships in Baltimore City. The president’s office asked for a report about partnerships that TU’s faculty and staff are leading in Baltimore City and what activities are included in those partnerships. Since faculty and staff members were already completing surveys about their partnerships and relationships, the Office of Partnerships and Outreach was able to easily review that information to determine which were taking place in Baltimore City. A question was even added to the Partnership/Relationship Record Form specifically asking whether the partnership did work in Baltimore City, which helped to identify those partnerships.

Compiling this report yielded over sixty partnerships that faculty and staff are leading within Baltimore City. That means that over 35 percent of TU’s partnerships are happening within the city limits. These partnerships were separated into five categories: educational efforts, jobs and trainings, health initiatives, recreational activities, and miscellaneous efforts.

The educational efforts category was by far the largest. The partnerships in this category range from arts education to STEM initiatives to anthropology. The jobs and trainings category also includes a number of programs aimed at preparing students for the workforce, as well as providing training for individuals already established in their careers or interested in changing careers. A few examples of partnerships that Towson is leading in Baltimore City include:

- ***City Kids Art Program*** – The project goal is to bring at-risk urban youth from Baltimore City to the Towson University setting where they will have the opportunity to explore the arts in a teaching and learning partnership with art education and elementary education students. This is done through service learning in the “Media and Techniques” and “Art and the Child” classes. This program has an overarching goal to break down stereotypes and to encourage the urban youth to gain a vision for continuing their education at the college level. The program is in its twentieth year and continues to grow and expand. Currently, all pre-service teachers are placed in city schools for their field experiences, and because of a generous grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, the program was able to hold an after-school arts program in 2015.
- ***Sharp Leadenhall Community Partnership*** – This partnership aims to assist community members in the south Baltimore neighborhood of Sharp Leadenhall in its efforts to improve the community. It includes nonprofits, churches, and community groups. Activities associated with this partnership include a concession stand before Ravens home games to raise funds for local initiatives; a strategic community partnership with AME Ebenezer, one of the oldest AME churches in the country; community clean-up days; and a walking tour of this historically black community that helped it receive historical status.
- ***MSDE Construction Design & Management Curriculum*** – The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Division of Career and College Readiness (DCCR) has charged Towson University (TU) and the Maryland Center for Construction Education and Innovation (MCCEI) to establish a standardized, project-based curriculum for teachers and students in Career and Technology Education (CTE) high schools in the field of Construction Design and Management (CDM). The project aims at developing a pipeline that would take students through high school and expose them to all aspects of the CDM industry with the purpose of developing skills that are transferrable to high level education as well as the Maryland workforce. Towson has enlisted faculty members, high school teachers, and industry professionals to develop this comprehensive, four-course curriculum. The curriculum exposes students to software that is already widely adopted by the industry, like AutoCAD and Revits.

These partnerships, as well as the others that were identified, show the diversity of programs that Towson is leading in Baltimore City. The university has been committed to developing partnerships across impact areas, not only in central Maryland, but in Baltimore City specifically. These partnerships have the potential to help the city bounce back from recent events by providing education and mentoring for children, professional development and training for adults, and health initiatives for citizens of the city’s neighborhoods.

This information can also help the governor's office and the USM determine where there may be opportunities for institutions to combine efforts. Other universities in the Baltimore area have different resources, so combining USM resources with other area university resources will help everyone have a larger reach and will impact more people. These partnerships have the potential to address the most current and pressing problems facing the Baltimore City neighborhoods that were hardest hit by offering expanded educational opportunities and economic development.

The new partnership/relationship support system allowed Towson University to be especially responsive in a time of crisis. Since the university's partnerships were all contained in one database, the Office of Partnerships and Outreach was able to quickly pull information about partnerships in Baltimore City to provide to the governor's office and the University System of Maryland. This information is essential to the larger purpose of knowing how universities in and around Baltimore are doing work in and supporting the city.

There is a lot of work to be done to restore the parts of Baltimore City where the rioting and unrest occurred. Partnerships not only between the city and one university, but between the city and multiple universities, will be critical in helping to rebuild the city and provide opportunities for its citizens. As stated above, these partnerships cover everything from educational opportunities to economic development to health initiatives. By expanding these partnerships, Towson and the other USM schools will have greater impact across Baltimore City.

The partnership and relationship information could be used also in future disasters or emergencies. As the university community becomes better acquainted with all of these partnerships and relationships, it will be easier to identify resources to be deployed. Part of the problem in the past was the institution simply not knowing what faculty and staff members were doing. Now that this information is in a centralized place, it is easier to access.

Future of Towson's Partnership/Relationship Support System

The current support system relies on online surveys to collect information. The results are then exported into an Excel spreadsheet to be analyzed. The spreadsheet is large and unwieldy and requires a lot of work to compile a report based on the results. The results are also not currently kept online, so if someone from outside the Office of Partnerships and Outreach or the Partnership Working Group wants to see the results, he or she must request them, rather than being able to search them online.

To address these issues, a new Community Partnerships Database is being developed. This new database will allow faculty and staff members to submit information about

their partnerships directly to the system. This will allow faculty and staff to log in at any time to see their partnerships and their annual progress. They will be able to easily see information about their partnerships rather than having to go through an intermediary.

In addition, general information about partnerships will be available online. Internal and external users will be able to see basic information, such as a brief description, who the partners are, impact areas, and types of activities. Users will also be able to search based on impact area and type of activity, making it easy to find partnerships that line up with their interests.

The new Community Partnerships Database will also make it easier to pull reports about TU's partnerships. These reports will include information at both the partnership and the university level. For faculty and staff members, the new database system will be able to generate two different types of reports: a snapshot partnership report and an annual partnership report. The snapshot report will be a report about one partnership at a particular point in time. The annual partnership report will include information about the individual's partnerships over time. Both will show the outcomes, impacts, and student involvement in the partnerships.

There will also be snapshot and annual reports at the university level. The snapshot report, like the single partnership snapshot, will provide information about TU's partnerships at that particular point in time. The university partnership annual report will contain information about TU's partnerships over time (number of partnerships this year vs. last year, etc.). Again, both of these reports will outline the outcomes, impacts, and student involvement of the university's partnerships.

These reports will help Towson University continue to get a better handle on the partnerships being led by its faculty and staff. Anyone inside or outside of the university will be able to see the far-reaching impacts of these partnerships and where they are happening. Towson was able to respond quickly to the request for information about activities in Baltimore City, and the new database will make responding to requests, especially in times of crisis, even easier and more efficient.

Additionally, the Partnership Working Group plans to develop a Community Feedback Form, hopefully in time for the next collection cycle. This will be a survey, much like the Partnership/Relationship Record Form and the Partnership/Relationship Feedback Form, that will evaluate the role of the community partner in each relationship or partnership and how the community partner felt about its participation. The inclusion of the community voice will help with evaluation of Towson's university-community partnerships and relationships not only from an institutional perspective, but from the community perspective as well. Since all of these partnerships and relationships are developed and implemented in collaboration with the community, measuring their input and thoughts is especially important.

Conclusion

Partnerships continue to be an integral part of Towson University's mission and strategic plan. The university is making strides in standardizing and centralizing the processes associated with tracking and assessing these partnerships through shared governance. The new partnership support system, as well as the Community Partnerships Database, will make it easier than ever to collect information about partnerships and generate reports. The system has already demonstrated its usefulness and responsiveness in the aftermath of the Baltimore riots. Towson was able to quickly compile information about its partnerships in Baltimore City to provide to the governor's office and the University System of Maryland. Moving forward, the system and database will allow the institution to easily pull reports about its partnerships at any time. Having more comprehensive information will help Towson have a larger reach and broader impacts through its partnerships and relationships.

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