

Developing a Strategic Approach to Social Responsiveness at the University of Cape Town, South Africa¹

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Guest editor Stanton's note: Community-engaged scholarship has been increasingly encouraged and supported by universities across the United States, but also internationally—in Africa, Australia, Europe, Asia, and South America. Institutions are taking significant steps to boost their outreach work, design and offer service-learning in the curriculum, and encourage and support research that focuses on community issues and information needs and is carried out in collaboration with identified community partners, both nonprofit organisations and civic and community groups. Scholars in Australia and South Africa have formed national organisations to promote this work. The International Consortium for Higher Education, Civic Responsibility, and Democracy, which works in collaboration with the Council of Europe (with 47 member countries) to support and advance engaged scholarship across the Atlantic and around the world.

Abstract

Collaborative community-engaged scholarship has roots in many parts of the world, and engaged practitioners and researchers are increasingly finding each other and sharing resources globally. This article focuses on a “social responsiveness” initiative at the University of Cape Town. Its story, told here by three University of Cape Town colleagues, illustrates the possibilities and complexities of this work in southern Africa. While strongly contextualized there, it also illustrates how the University of Cape Town has both benefited from and contributed to the broader international discussions taking place through TRUCEN (The Research University Civic Engagement Network), the Talloires Network, and other means.

Introduction

Over the years, the University of Cape Town has profiled a significant number of socially responsive cases in its annual social responsiveness reports. These cases of good practice offer rich displays of how staff and students are responding to social, economic, and development challenges facing South Africa, Africa, and the world. Significantly, the academics involved in these cases are drawing from the knowledge of their disciplines to address the challenges. Equally pertinent, in this documentation the notions of “engagement with external constituencies”

and “public benefit” emerge as key in defining what constitutes socially responsive cases. The university’s recently approved institutional policy framework (*University of Cape Town, 2008*) is underpinned by a conceptual framework that acknowledges the interconnectedness among social responsiveness and other core activities of the university, namely research, teaching, and social responsiveness that takes place outside the formal curriculum. On the ground, however, there are serious anomalies in terms of how social responsiveness is defined and what constitutes public benefit. These contestations have found their way into the performance criteria for reviewing academics. Within the university’s Social Responsiveness Committee, which is mandated with promoting social responsiveness, emerging voices are suggesting a shift from the term “social responsiveness” to “engaged scholarship.”

The proponents of this shift argue that the use of the term “engaged scholarship” would ease the confusion on what is and is not included in definitions of social responsiveness at the University of Cape Town, and would emphasise the interconnectedness between research and social responsiveness. The shift to genuine engaged scholarship challenges notions of scholarship and peer-review because engaged scholarship involves not only peer-reviewed written publications, but also applied products like government reports, expert advice, workshops, and training guides. Reviewing the university’s social responsiveness policy to address its anomalies between policy and practice leaves no doubt that new methods of peer-reviewing and judging engaged scholarship need to be made more explicit at a policy level.

This article reflects on recent strategic initiatives supported by the University of Cape Town’s vice chancellor as part of his commitment to enhancing the institution’s contribution to addressing development challenges; papers commissioned by the University Social Responsiveness Committee on ways of enhancing practices associated with social responsiveness; and, in the concluding section, key elements that would constitute a more strategic approach to social responsiveness in a research-intensive university in the South African context. In order to reflect on these initiatives, however, it is critical to locate the social responsiveness project at University of Cape Town within a broader context. This is done in Part 1 by providing a background to the current situation across three phases of development. This includes an assessment of social responsiveness at the University of Cape Town, drawing on Stanton (2007).

Part I: Context and Background: Institutionalising Social Responsiveness at the University of Cape Town

The process of institutionalising social responsiveness at the University of Cape Town has involved three phases (Favish, 2010; Favish & Ngcelwane, 2009). The first phase (2004–2006) focused on opening up debate within the institution about the meaning of social responsiveness. During this phase the university produced annual publications of portraits of practice, which surfaced how academics on the ground were using their scholarship to engage with development challenges facing the country. In addition, several symposia were organised to stimulate debate within the university community about different forms of social responsiveness, and its relationship to teaching and research.

Results of Phase I (2004–2006)

At the end of the first phase, the University of Cape Town chose to adopt a broad definition of social responsiveness, which would embody links between activities (involving academic staff and external constituencies) and intentional public benefit. The notion of “public benefit” was preferred to the notion of “community engagement” because it covered a wide range of contributions being made to social, economic, cultural, political, and environmental development as well as a wide variety of external constituencies with which the University of Cape Town was engaging. The term “social responsiveness” was chosen given the perceived need to counter the considerable effort being placed on positioning the university as a world-class research-led institution by emphasising the importance of a historically white institution needing to respond to its local, regional, and national context through its research and teaching. This position was formally endorsed in 2006 when the university senate approved a definition of social responsiveness stipulating that it must have an intentional public purpose or benefit (University of Cape Town, 2006). Defining social responsiveness in relation to the notion of public benefit accords with Hall’s (2010) view that it is preferable to “think [of the third leg of universities] in terms of public goods, conceptualised and offered in partnership with a range of civil society organisations with the aim of contributing to generally accepted social and economic [and cultural and environmental] benefits as a form of return on the investment of public funds” (pp. 27- 28).

The university grappled with developing a policy to address the widespread misconception that “social responsiveness” referred to activities which had no relationship to the university’s research and teaching missions. The policy adopted by the university’s senate and council at the end of 2008 is underpinned by a conceptual framework (see Figure 1) that acknowledges the interconnectedness among civic engagement and the other core activities of the university (*University of Cape Town, 2008*).

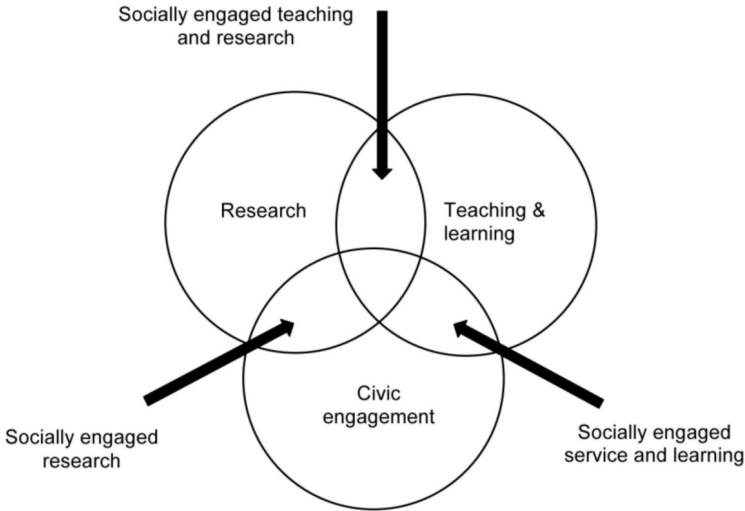


Figure 1. Conceptual framework for social responsiveness at the University of Cape Town

The inclusion of “civic engagement” was deemed necessary, as it recognised the critical role voluntary community service plays in helping promote active citizenship among students. The framework accordingly recognises the following major forms of social responsiveness:

- Research-oriented forms.
- Teaching and learning-oriented forms.
- Civic engagement with no link to the formal curriculum, involving students, faculty, and staff.

The policy outlines other ways to strengthen and enhance social responsiveness at the university, including functions to be performed by support units; allocating accountability for promoting social responsiveness to a member of the university’s executive; and the establishment of a social responsiveness senate committee. To complement awards issued to staff and students in recognition of

achievements in teaching and research, the policy called for the creation of an institutional social responsiveness award for staff, and certificates for students. Finally, the policy made provision for staff members' contributions to social responsiveness to be considered in performance reviews.

Results of Phase 2 (2006–2008)

In the second phase (2006–2008), the annual portraits of practice were used as the basis for developing an overarching policy framework for social responsiveness at the University of Cape Town. Although much progress has been made at the university in institutionalising social responsiveness, the continued debates about the meaning of social responsiveness precipitated two decisions: (1) to develop a more strategic and coordinated university-wide approach to social responsiveness, and (2) to launch a review of the social responsiveness policy itself. This represents the third, and current, phase of the University of Cape Town's efforts to enhance social responsiveness.

Current Phase 3 (2008–Present)

Drawing on Stanton (2007), the university inventoried its social responsiveness in 2010 by identifying evidence of institution-wide engagement and campus-wide visibility and recognition of exemplary efforts. Between 2004 and 2010, the University of Cape Town collected information on social responsiveness activities by compiling annual social responsiveness reports. A dedicated website maintained by the Institutional Planning Department (<http://www.socialresponsiveness.uct.ac.za/>) contains information on the case profiles presented in the reports. The reports and the website were used to give visibility and recognition to exemplary efforts across the campus. Examples are provided in this section.

Stimulation of debate within the university about engagement activities.

Three colloquia were organised to stimulate debate within the university about social responsiveness activities, and about issues that had surfaced in the analysis of the portraits of practice. The portraits in the annual reports were carefully structured around themes pertinent to developing a scholarship of engagement.

Recognition of engaged scholarship in tenure and promotion decisions.

During 2007, revised criteria for performance reviews of academic staff were implemented for the first time. Social responsiveness was embedded in the criteria, which stipulated that

all academic staff are expected to exhibit some level of social responsiveness through teaching and learning, research and/or leadership. At each level the onus lies on the person to demonstrate social responsiveness of an appropriate type for this academic rank. (*University of Cape Town, 2007b, p. 1*)

Criteria submitted to the Senate Executive Committee in 2011 made provision for social responsiveness to be a fourth and separate category in the framework for reviewing the performance of academic staff for promotion, and determining whether they meet the requirements of their jobs. Its inclusion as a separate category signals that social responsiveness is being taken more seriously in the institution (*University of Cape Town, 2011*).

Recognition through grants and awards.

Beere, Votruba, and Wells (2011) posit that public engagement requires a paradigm shift away from the image of the academic as someone who works alone, removed from the realities of day to day challenges and problems, unconcerned about whether their work has applied value, and judged by the number of articles they publish and the stature of journals in which they are published (*p. 100*).

By carefully selecting, nurturing, supporting, and rewarding academic staff, the institution can aid a shift toward institutionalising social responsiveness. It is against this backdrop that the University of Cape Town instituted the social responsiveness policy framework and proposed an institutional award to recognise academic staff efforts to engage and take an active development role in the cultural, economic, political, scientific, and social environment. Since 2009, the Distinguished Social Responsiveness Award stands alongside the awards for teaching and research. The award criteria include

- activities that have resulted in demonstrable mutual benefit to the academic enterprise and an external non-academic constituency;
- evidence of shared planning and decision-making practices in the initiative;

- evidence of the way the initiative has enhanced teaching/learning or research processes; and
- documented excellence in extending knowledge production (including indigenous knowledge), as well as dissemination, integration, and application of knowledge through social responsiveness.

Analysis of the nomination portfolios reveals that the nominees' engagement does not compete with their other workload demands; it is integrated with their research and teaching, and it enhances their work.

Recognition of student involvement in community service.

Many universities provide awards and hold celebrations that honour students for their contributions to communities. Although the social responsiveness policy framework makes provision for recognition of student involvement in community service, the university has not yet approved an implementation procedure.

Provision of sustained funding or grants for engaged scholarship.

At the end of 2009, after a series of consultations within the university, the council approved the vice chancellor's strategic plan for 2010–2014. One of the strategic goals commits the University of Cape Town to expand and enhance its contribution to South Africa's development challenges (*University of Cape Town, 2009b*). To accomplish this goal, the vice chancellor established a strategic plan implementation fund, a portion of which will support social responsiveness initiatives.

Appointment of staff and establishment of capacity and infrastructure to support social responsiveness.

In 2008, the vice chancellor established within the Institutional Planning Department a Social Responsiveness Unit charged with building capacity and infrastructure to support social responsiveness. In addition, staff members in the Research Office, the Department of Student Affairs, the Contracts and Intellectual Property Office, the Centre for Higher Education and Development, and the Institutional Planning Department also support and promote social responsiveness in various ways. Examples of functions carried out by the Institutional Planning Department include

- collating and uploading information on social responsiveness activities made available in annual reports and other sources;
- promoting and enabling the harnessing of scholarly expertise within the university in support of development initiatives in the wider society; and
- facilitating the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Provincial Government of the Western Cape and the agreement with the City of Cape Town.

Examples of functions carried out by the Centre for Higher Education Development include

- facilitating development of new forms of pedagogy and curriculum arrangements that could be conducive to expanding service-learning; and
- engaging with faculties (university schools or colleges) about ways of promoting critical citizenship among students through participation in social responsiveness activities.

Examples of functions carried out by the Research and Innovation and Postgraduate Funding Offices include

- providing staff development and support related to promoting research innovation at local, sectoral, and national levels; and
- implementing the signature theme policy, which requires demonstrated social responsiveness and evidence of impact on the curriculum.

A representative function carried out by the Department of Student Affairs is implementation of an appropriate reward and recognition system to promote student leadership and student volunteerism (individually or as groups through student clubs, student societies, and student development agencies) that benefit internal and external communities.

Engagement with the university's external constituencies about the university's role and effectiveness in social responsiveness.

In 2009, the annual social responsiveness colloquium included presentations from external constituencies about their perceptions

of their partnerships with the University of Cape Town. The colloquium's participants raised issues related to the complexities of working across boundaries and the challenges of extractive research. They also alluded to the benefits of engagement (e.g., improved quality of research through enhanced relationships with communities, application of theory to practical problems leading to the generation of new ways of approaching issues and learning opportunities for students). Other examples of working with external constituencies are the university's Memoranda of Understanding with provincial and city governments and the other universities in the Western Cape, which are designed to strengthen collaboration.

This completes the contextual framing and history of the social responsiveness project at the University of Cape Town. All forms of community-engaged scholarship are located simultaneously in an institutional and historical context; framing the social responsiveness project at the University of Cape Town in this way thus provides for a richer understanding of more recent initiatives at this institution.

Part 2: Initiatives for a Strategic, Coordinated Approach to Social Responsiveness at the University of Cape Town

Documenting developments at the University of Cape Town between 2004 and 2008 suggests that most of the criteria identified by Stanton (2007) have been or are being addressed. Most of the social responsiveness initiatives at the University of Cape Town, however, have occurred at the individual or unit level. Although achievements at these levels are legitimate and desirable, the university's new strategic plan approved in 2010 identified the need for a more strategic and coordinated university-wide approach.

The University of Cape Town's 2010–2014 strategic plan commits the university to expanding and enhancing its contribution to South Africa's development challenges through promoting

- engaged research and teaching;
- democracy, respect for human rights, and commitment to social justice;
- partnerships with various levels of government, civil society, and universities in South Africa;
- values of engaged citizenship and social justice amongst the students;

- the scholarship of engagement; and
- an enabling institutional environment for the university's objectives to be achieved (*University of Cape Town, 2009b*).

Four Initiatives to Support the 2010–2014 Strategic Plan

At the end of 2009, the vice chancellor sought approval from the council to allocate 2 million South African Rand (equal to \$2,362,980 U.S. dollars) per year over 5 years for the implementation of the 2010–2014 strategic plan. Four initiatives related to social responsiveness were supported through the vice chancellor's strategic fund and are presented below. The vice chancellor articulated a commitment to appoint experts to lead and coordinate intellectual projects that draw on the strengths of individual departments across the university to enhance the University of Cape Town's impact in addressing four problems: safety and violence, public schooling, African climate and development, and poverty and inequality.

The Safety and Violence Initiative.

The Safety and Violence Initiative was formed in 2010, drawing participation from the Institute of Criminology; the Gender, Health and Justice Research Unit; the Law, Race and Gender Research Unit; the Department of Psychology; the School of Public Health and Family Medicine; the Department of Social Anthropology; the Department of Social Development; the Centre for Social Science Research; and the Department of Surgery, among others. A concept document was prepared and work commenced on a paper, "Why Is There So Much Violence in South Africa?" Other topics to be considered by the initiative include the visual representation of xenophobic violence in the media; racial and national identity; the association between substance abuse and violence; youth resilience; and health promotion and police narratives. In September 2011, the university hosted a conference on safety and violence that was attended by experts in these areas, some from as far afield as Jamaica, Scotland, and Switzerland.

The Public Schooling Initiative.

In 2009, the University of Cape Town appointed an advisor who worked with individuals, departments, and units involved

in school intervention work called Edulab to launch a public school initiative. Out of these consultations, a decision was taken to the township of Khayelitsha, Cape Town. Matriculants from Khayelitsha remain severely underrepresented at the University of Cape Town. To address this imbalance, 100 academically gifted Grade 10 learners (five from each of the 20 secondary schools in the township) were selected to participate in a 100-UP programme funded from the university's strategic fund. The aim of this programme is to better prepare these learners to compete for places at the University of Cape Town once they have completed their pre-university schooling at the end of 2013. Participants are not guaranteed places at the University of Cape Town; however, if they pass the admissions test (a national benchmark test for higher education entry, and a fairly new initiative in South Africa although not at University of Cape Town), they are assured financial aid through a combination of bursary/scholarship support and loans.

Over the course of the next three years (2011–2013), staff and students drawn from across the university will work with the Schools Development Unit (a unit at University of Cape Town focused on teacher and schools development) on this programme. Other efforts include developing collaborative initiatives in the area of teacher development and improving learner performance.

The African Climate and Development Initiative.

In 2009, the African Climate and Development Initiative was launched with 4 million South African Rand (equal to \$472,596 U.S. dollars) from the vice chancellor's strategic fund to support the six research projects related to climate change and development. Examples of activities include

- working to change atmospheric CO₂ as a driver of land-cover change in Africa (Department of Botany);
- building new "Climate Smart" capacity for climate services;
- working with organisations to effect strategic change and new governance systems in response to complex socio-ecological problems (Graduate School of Business);
- identifying the characterisation of the mechanisms of desiccation tolerance in plants (Plant Stress Unit);

- working to effect climate change, climate justice, and behavioural responses to climate risk; developing good local governance, social institutions, and provision of basic services towards development (Environmental Policy Research Unit); and
- working towards environmental governance for social justice, drawing on lessons from across natural resource sectors in Southern Africa (Environmental Evaluation Unit).

Other activities supported by the vice chancellor's strategic fund include a planned new study by the Marine Research Institute on marine multi-scale data and models. To raise awareness on issues related to climate change, the University of Cape Town's council endorsed the creation of a pro vice chancellor position to lead the initiative. Final approval for the master's programme in climate change and sustainable development was made in late November 2010. This is the first example of the impact of the growing interdisciplinary research and collaboration on shaping new educational programmes that draw on expertise from multiple disciplines.

The Poverty and Inequality Initiative.

In 2010, an interdisciplinary group was established to conceptualise an initiative focused on poverty and inequality. This planning group surveyed the campus to learn how members of the university community engage with the challenge of poverty and inequality through their research, teaching, and social responsiveness. This information on poverty- and inequality-related activities at the University of Cape Town was elicited to

- be shared amongst colleagues working in this area and promote collaborative opportunities;
- facilitate opportunities for engaging with the National Planning Commission in the Office of the Presidency, thereby enabling the translation of research into the development of key national policies; and
- provide the basis for invitations to participate in a future University of Cape Town-hosted symposium.

This initiative addresses a significant issue. Nearly two decades since the transition to democratic rule, poverty, and massive inequalities in the country persist. The 2005–2006 Income and Expenditure Survey indicated that while the richest 10% of the population accounts for 51% of all income in South Africa, the

poorest 10% accounts for a mere 0.2%; the poorest 50% of South Africans have only 10% of total income (*University of Cape Town Poverty and Inequality Planning Group, 2011*).

In summary, the four strategic initiatives outlined above are an expression of the commitment of the vice chancellor (principal) of the university to institutionalise social responsiveness at the University of Cape Town. Although it is too early to assess the impact of the work associated with these initiatives, there is evidence of a growing desire on the part of academics to get involved in the initiatives. The vice chancellor's leadership role and funding support are key factors for encouraging the university community to participate.

Promoting Democracy, Respect for Human Rights, and a Commitment to Social Justice Through Public Debate

The vice chancellor is committed to creating spaces for more public debate through encouraging academic staff to provide public commentary on topical issues, to offer lectures on campus (open to students, staff, and the public), and to participate in the vice chancellor's lecture series. The university's academics, therefore, are encouraged to fulfill their socially mandated role as opinion shapers and critics. Inviting the public to engage deeply on issues that pose a threat to the country's fledgling democracy is perceived as a key mandate of the University of Cape Town as an engaged university.

Nurturing values of engaged citizenship and social justice amongst the students.

In 2010, a pilot project, University of Cape Town Global Citizenship: Leading for Social Justice, was launched as an extra-curricular programme to provide students with an opportunity to engage critically with contemporary global debates, and to reflect on issues of citizenship and social justice through meaningful community service. The programme, funded by the vice chancellor's strategic fund, offers students a co-curricular learning programme that will appear on their transcript (*see <http://www.globalcitizen.uct.ac.za>*).

How the programme works.

The pilot programme (2010 and 2011) had two modules: Module 1, "Global Debates, Local Voices," and Module 2, "Thinking

about Volunteering: Service, Boundaries, and Power.” Students could elect to do one 11-week module, or both. The modules were delivered through a blend of face-to-face and online learning via Vula (University of Cape Town’s online learning and curriculum management system). First-year Ph.D. students from six of the university’s faculties or colleges participated in the programme. There were no formal entry requirements, but students wishing to participate in Module 2 needed to be active in community service. In the two pilot years, more than 200 students graduated from the programme. For this small fraction of the student body (less than 1%), participation results in a full curriculum. The South African higher education system was modeled after the Scottish system, so students in South Africa specialise early in their degree programmes and have little time for co-curricular programmes, unlike students in the United States, who have some flexibility in selecting courses.

Beginning in 2012, the Global Citizenship programme is being conceptualised as an award programme, with students receiving a Global Citizenship Award upon graduation. The programme will serve up to 1,200 students annually (about 5% of the student body). The award requires that students complete three activities over the course of their degree programme: a credit-bearing core course, “Community-Engaged Learning, Citizenship and Social Justice,” which includes 10 hours of community service; an additional 60 hours of community service; and participation in a Global Debates Workshop Series, which relates to the four strategic initiatives (Safety and Violence; Public Schooling; African Climate and Development; and Poverty and Inequality). The workshop series is open to all University of Cape Town students, not just those in the award programme.

The impetus for the award programme included the need

- for institutionalisation and curriculum embeddedness;
- to provide a more in-depth and sustained programme of learning and action for University of Cape Town students; and
- for financial sustainability by developing a model that can generate income if not be completely self-sustaining (This will be achieved by accrediting part of the programme so that student fee income can cover part of the award programme costs. The first fee-paying course will be offered in 2013. For the balance of the costs, the programme will depend on donor funding).

The Global Citizenship programme gives students flexibility during their degree programme for an in-depth and continuous learning experience. It is hoped that this experience will deepen the possibility of students sustaining insights gained through the programme once they leave the university, and will encourage them to continue seeing themselves as young leaders connected globally, but also committed to working for social justice locally.

Part of the programme has been offered for credit for both financial and strategic reasons: not only will it generate fee income, but students will see that the University of Cape Town values this kind of learning and enrichment enough to make it credit bearing. The key challenge is for students and academics to view the programme as a learning programme, not just an extracurricular activity.

Promoting Partnerships With Civil Society

The University of Cape Town's strategic goals reflect a commitment to address the pressing social, economic, and developmental problems facing South Africa, and to enhance the impact of research by making it more visible and accessible to external communities. To create a visible mechanism for communities who do not have historical relationships with the university, the University of Cape Town Knowledge Co-op Project was launched in August 2011. The main objective of the project is to enable external constituencies to access knowledge, skills, resources, and professional expertise within the university that are relevant to problems they experience. It also provides a framework for research, teaching, and learning that is grounded in an engagement with society.

In establishing the University of Cape Town Knowledge Co-op Project, the university was influenced by the model of science shops, which has been used in various parts of the world. To quote from the Living Knowledge documents:

Science Shops are small entities that carry out scientific research in a wide range of disciplines-usually free of charge and-on [**behalf of citizens and local civil society**] [They are] organisations created as mediators between citizen groups (trade unions, pressure groups, non-profit organisations, social groups, environmentalists, consumers, residents association etc.) and research institutions (universities, independent research facilities) [**A Science Shop provides independent, participatory research support in**

response to concerns experienced by civil society]

. . . . In practice, contact is established between a civil society organisation and a Science Shop or CBR centre on a problem in which the civil society organisation is seeking research support. In this collective search for a solution new knowledge is generated, or at least existing knowledge is combined and adapted-again, in a true partnership without ‘science’ prevailing in any way. Through their contacts, Science Shops provide a unique antenna function for society’s current and future demands on science. (<http://www.livingknowledge.org/livingknowledge/science-shops>)

Linked to the Knowledge Co-op, funding has been obtained from the National Research Foundation (the national body providing research funding to universities in South Africa) to evaluate the project as it develops. In particular, this research project aims to

- generate insight into the role of the university and how it engages with community partners in a knowledge partnership;
- understand the extent to which needs of the stakeholders both within the university and in the community are addressed; and
- evaluate the degree to which the “brokering“ role is successful in addressing the expectations of stakeholders.

To date, seven pilot projects have involved students conducting research or producing particular kinds of outputs for community partners as part of their degree programme requirements (University of Cape Town partner is indicated in parentheses):

- Developing material and design for fencing for a township crèche (Mechanical Engineering).
- Exploring mobility issues for people on tuberculosis treatment in Khayelitsha (Department of Social Anthropology).
- Investigating the difficulties of adhering to second-line anti-retroviral treatment and developing support mechanisms that make it easier for patients to adhere (Master’s in Public Health Programme).
- Advising the layout and design of a handbook for a mentoring programme (collaboration with staff of the Professional Communication Unit).

- Analysing exit strategies for sex workers for a non-governmental organization advocating for a changed legal framework (students and a staff member from Psychology).
- Developing an electronic database for a health non-governmental organization to document client details and programme activities, profile clients, and consolidate monthly data (a team of honours students from Information Systems).
- Collecting and collating data to enable a civic group to advocate to local authorities regarding the need for a footbridge and the risks of an open canal (Department of Social Anthropology). A short review has been completed; this may lead to a dissertation.

Part 3: The University of Cape Town Explores Ways to Enhance Socially Responsive Practices

Linked to Phase 3 of the social responsiveness project, the University of Cape Town is currently (in 2012) in the third phase of institutionalising social responsiveness. Phase 3 includes a review of the 2008 Social Responsiveness Policy Framework, and entrenching engaged scholarship more firmly within the university's promotion criteria. As a part of the review process, the University Social Responsiveness Committee commissioned reflective pieces addressing the contestations within the institution about the conceptual framework underpinning the Social Responsiveness Policy Framework, and providing ideas for enhancing the university's social responsiveness activities.

For example, one paper commissioned focused on the debate on the social responsiveness conceptual framework (*Cooper, 2011*). Cooper argues that the concept of “engaged scholarship” better describes academics’ “engagement” with the “wider society.” Moreover, “engagement” should be viewed as part of an emergent “third mission” of universities. He argues that encouraging more academics to value practices around a third mission of “socio-cultural development” of society necessitates a term that explicitly links this work with the core activities of universities, namely research and teaching. Cooper argues that “unless some of the ambiguities and absences in the existing Policy Framework are clarified – with the concept of Engaged Scholarship taking centre-stage... we will continue to see [social responsiveness] being seriously undervalued” (*University of Cape Town, 2011*).

Cooper further argues that some of the “current confusion about recognising SR [social responsiveness] as a vital criterion for promotion and tenure across the different faculties of University of Cape Town (UCT) is at least partly a result of the ‘ambiguities and absences’ around the recent UCT definitions of SR.” (*University of Cape Town, 2011, p. 27*). In reviewing the current conceptual framework, Cooper advocates the use of the framework developed by Michigan State University, which defines scholarship as

the [**thoughtful creation, interpretation, communication, or use of knowledge that is based in the ideas of the disciplines, professions, and interdisciplinary fields**]. What qualifies an activity as “scholarship” is that it be deeply informed by accumulating knowledge in some field, that the knowledge is skillfully interpreted and deployed, and that the activity is carried out with intelligent openness to new information, debate, and criticism. (*Provost’s Committee on University Outreach, MSU, 1993, p. 2*)

Critical to this definition is its requirement that engaged scholarship retain the essential elements of quality scholarship. That is, engaged scholarship must build on existing disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge, generate new knowledge, and employ methods that adhere to the highest standards of the disciplines. Equally significant is that engaged scholarship must subject itself to peer scrutiny, debate, and criticism in terms of its quality. The emphasis on the scholarly nature of engagement resonates with Fourie (2006), who has also argued that in engaging with external constituencies, academics should not deviate from the intrinsic nature of the university, which imposes a fundamental requirement on all teaching, learning, research, and engagement to be scholarly and scholarship based. The definition, according to Fourie, also draws from Boyer’s seminal work (1990), which outlines four dimensions of scholarship: the scholarship of discovery, the scholarship of teaching, the scholarship of application, and the scholarship of integration.

Michigan State University’s notion of engaged scholarship for universities includes two important aspects: (1) engagement should relate to the academic’s disciplinary expertise, and (2) engaged scholarship should involve working with a non-academic audience external to the university. University of Cape Town’s earlier definition of social responsiveness had referred to “scholarly-based activities and non-academic external constituencies”:

Scholarly-based activities (including use-inspired basic research) that have projected and defined outcomes that match or contribute to developmental objectives or policies defined by civil society, local, provincial or national government, international agencies or industry. (*University of Cape Town, 2005, p. 4, citing Stokes, 1997, p. 74*)

However, the 2008 revised definition of social responsiveness, which was approved by the University of Cape Town Senate, did not. Hence the door opened to different interpretations of social responsiveness. Cooper (2011, p. 33) cites two influences on the changed definition. First, he suggests there was no unanimity on what social responsiveness was, and how it could be viewed and valued in terms of whether it achieved standards of rigor and quality. Second, the group formulating the policy framework felt compelled to accommodate student forms of engagement that were outside the formal curriculum, and this had an indirect impact on how social responsiveness was defined. Beere et al. (2011) recognise that a considerable body of literature distinguishes civic engagement from other forms of engagement by pointing out that *civic engagement* often refers to student involvement in the community when the goal of that involvement is civic learning. In reviewing the policy, it may be necessary for the University of Cape Town to consider whether using distinctive terms for student and staff engagement would be desirable. The lack of clarity in the framework has created the space to treat activities like the external examining of students' exam scripts and papers or editing academic journals as forms of social responsiveness, as evidenced by the proposed new criteria for *ad hominem* promotions submitted by several faculties in September 2011 (*University of Cape Town, 2011*).

Admittedly, lack of clarity about social responsiveness (insofar as academics are concerned) is not the only factor that influences practices within the different faculties with regard to promotion criteria. The ambiguity about what social responsiveness is and what it is not hinders institutionalisation of engaged scholarship at the University of Cape Town. This point is echoed by Fourie (2006), who points out that it is important to clarify the conceptual framework of the discourse because improper choices of terms and distinctions may lead to conceptualisations and implementation of community engagement programmes that continue to get stuck in old ruts, involve only a peripheral group of staff, or make little difference to the conditions of the surrounding society. The points raised by Cooper (2011) are critical in reviewing the University of Cape Town's social responsiveness policy framework. They bring to

the fore issues that pertain to academics and their work, and how that work is recognised at the university.

Conclusion

Most universities whose academics are engaged with societal challenges have not developed systematic methods of measuring the impact and the quality of their social responsiveness activities. The absence of agreed mechanisms for measuring the quality of social responsiveness undermines efforts to enhance both its status and its use in promotion processes. Over the years, the University of Cape Town's annual social responsiveness reports have profiled social responsiveness-related units and their activities. Many academics have stated that they experience challenges with regard to evaluating the quality and impact of their socially-engaged outputs as academically credible. For example, when Sowman and Wynberg were interviewed in 2007 they pointed out that the applied work of many research units is not recognised because universities do not have an objective and reliable mechanism to measure its value to the institution (*University of Cape Town, 2007a*). Hence, the University Social Responsiveness Committee commissioned Goodman, an evaluation expert, to provide suggestions on how to evaluate the quality of "other" scholarly outputs generated through engagement, and to assess the impact of socially responsive activities.

The conceptual framework proposed by Goodman (2011) is based on the theory and practice of programme evaluation as articulated by Rossi, Lipsey, and Freeman (2004) and a number of other studies. It consists of a value chain of evaluation events:

- the accurate diagnosis of the condition the programme is designed to address;
- evaluation at the theory level involving an assessment of whether the causal logic implicit in the programme is practically realistic and theoretically sound;
- implementation evaluation designed to assess questions of delivery, organisational efficiency, and service utilisation;
- outcome evaluations that investigate whether the programme has achieved its intended goals; and
- programme impact theory to help develop and classify outcomes.

Goodman's (2011) framework provides a potential tool for analysing the effectiveness or efficiencies of various components of a social responsiveness intervention, and may help generate data about whether or not concrete outputs or deliverables have been achieved for the stakeholders involved. It may also help to assess the quality of these outputs. It, however, would not be suitable for social responsiveness activities that do not involve actual interventions, or for initiatives where it is difficult to measure the direct impact of the academic input given the multiple factors that may influence an outcome.

In summary, institutionalising engagement in universities is a major challenge because it demands an overhaul of systems that are deeply entrenched in a university's culture. Engagement challenges the recognition and reward system, and demands new ways of viewing scholarship in a culture that predominantly values publications in peer-reviewed journals. These challenges are not peculiar to South Africa and the University of Cape Town. Universities all over the world are struggling to adapt to a changing world which requires new knowledge systems and interdisciplinary university-community engagement.

Endnote

1. The process of developing an approach for social responsiveness is described in detail in Favish and Ngcelwane (2009).

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