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Visioning Engagement: What, Why, How?

Engaged Department Institute

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Visioning Engagement: What, Why, How?

Engaged Department Institute

University of Southern Maine

August, 2015
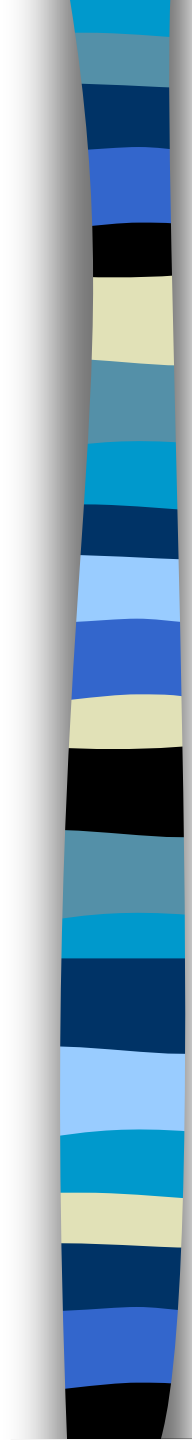
An *engaged department* works toward:

- Integrating community-based learning as a strategy to achieve key academic goals for students and faculty

- Incorporating curricular scaffolding of community-based opportunities to enhance student learning and development

- Supporting collaborative approaches to community partnerships

- Establishing a culture that supports and rewards community-based work

Why be an *engaged department*?

Benefits to Constituents:
- Students: more cohesion, deeper learning, richer experiences over time, manageable workloads

- Faculty: Ends isolation of engaged faculty, recognition, student learning enhanced, scholarship opportunities

- Community: Increased capacity, more resources, longer-term and reciprocal partnerships

- Institution: Fulfill "civic mission" better, recruitment, reputation and recognition

So How Do We Begin to Become an Engaged Fellow (or *Dept/Cluster)*?

Defining Civic Engagement

◆ Generic/Institutional vs. Discipline-specific (or interdisciplinary-specific)

◆ Contested or amorphous concepts

◆ Ideological?

Defining *Civic Learning*

"We conceive of 'civic learning' as any learning that contributes to student preparation for community or public involvement in a diverse democratic society. A loose interpretation of civic learning would lead one to believe that education in general prepares one for citizenship in our democracy. And it certainly does. However, we have in mind here a strict interpretation of civic learning – knowledge, skills and values that make an explicitly direct and purposeful contribution to the preparation of students for active civic participation."

Defining Civic Learning: Outcomes for Students

➢ **Civic Knowledge**

➢ **Civic Skills**

➢ **Civic Values**

➢ **+ *Civic Motivation***

A Brief Word on Civic Motivation

- "Student Voice"
- "Civic Vocation"
- Ability to impact issues you care about
- Opportunity as Motivation

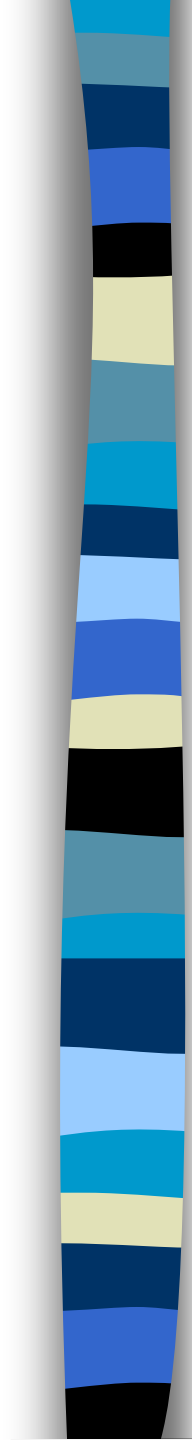# What would your department look like if it were completely "engaged"?

Goals for Engagement:

➢ Faculty, Department as a Whole

➢ Students

➢ Community Partners

➢ Department's role in Institution

Becoming Engaged:
An Organizing Perspective

➢ Constituents & Interests

➢ Resources

➢ Opposition & Competition

➢ Strategy & Action

➢ Reflection and New Strategies

What are the barriers to engagement as an individual or as a department/cluster?

What are the barriers to engagement?

Departmental/Institutional barriers

Pedagogical barriers

Student barriers

Community barriers

Departmental/Institutional Barriers

- Time and resources for implementation; engagement as an add-on

- Lack of tangible support by academic leadership

- Hostility from influential faculty

- Little to no sense of collective responsibility

- Student/faculty ratios

- An imposition for part-time and/or "contract" faculty

- Reward system, esp. promotion and tenure guidelines

Pedagogical Barriers

' Student perceptions of their experience: cultivation of stereotypes

' Adding to an already-full course or program

' Addressing both community and academic goals in courses

' Content vs. process issues

' Getting from concrete experience to abstract concepts

Student Barriers

- ➢ Logistics: Time, transportation
- ➢ Other commitments (classes, work, family, co-curricular activities)
- ➢ Multiple engagement requirements
- ➢ Perceptions/preconceptions about "community"

Community Barriers

’ **Logistics: staffing, transportation to sites, scheduling**

’ **"Community Time" vs. "Academic Time"**

’ **Reciprocity: Faculty buy-in of community outcomes; Partner buy-in of scholarship & learning outcomes**

’ **Historical legacies between community & university**

’ **Liability risks**

What are some ways to overcome the barriers?

What change strategies will work for you to overcome your barriers?