Pathways to the Metropolitan University

Rutgers-Camden

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Pathways to the Metropolitan University

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Rutgers-Camden
What Is a Metropolitan University?

Distinctive mission: To unleash the resources embedded in the campus to advance regional goals

- Provider of educational access and excellence for regional students of all ages
- Educator of the next generation of regional leaders
- Source of innovation to address regional challenges
- Participant in conversations on key regional issues
- Partner in regional initiatives
- Convener and venue for regional events and discussions
- Economic actor driving regional growth and opportunity

Elements of a Systematic Approach

- Senior leadership with university-wide reach
- Faculty capacity-building for teaching and research
- Alignment of tenure and promotion standards
- Curricular development and reform
- Student curricular and co-curricular opportunities
- Resources and structures for regionally-relevant research
- Resources and structures for outreach
- Economic development strategy and staffing
- College access and pipeline programs
- Platform partnerships
- Consistent messaging about the anchor institution role and the centrality of engagement
Exemplars

• UMass Dartmouth
• University of Louisville
• University of Nebraska-Omaha
• Northern Kentucky University
• Syracuse University
• Portland State University
Factors Determining Time to Liftoff

- What is already happening through centers and institutes, the curriculum, etc.?
- Is there pent-up demand for engagement among students and faculty?
- Do you have willing partners among community organizations and anchor institutions?
- Can you immediately provide funding to incentivize action?
Factors Determining Financial Costs and Benefits

• Will you need new staffing? Can you re-define roles, appoint faculty leaders, etc.?
• What incentives will work for faculty?
• What external support is available, e.g., community foundations, corporate CSR and foundations?
• Can you shape an attractive admissions profile, focusing on a new academic program, experiential learning, internships, etc.
Pitfalls

• Internal
  – Perception of top-down approach
  – Choosing focus areas from above rather than locating interests that dovetail with existing capacity
  – Perception of conflict with academic rigor

• External
  – Sense that the university shows up only when it benefits the university
  – Language of using communities as laboratories
  – Creating multiple projects without sufficient staff support
Relationship to academic organization

• Professional schools are early adopters with high impact
• Social sciences easy to recruit
• Natural sciences more challenging to recruit but potentially high impact
• Metropolitan mission can become a criterion for evaluating proposed programs
Means to Engage Community

- Begin by listening
- Build from existing relationships
- Invite partners and potential partners to campus for conversations with the president
- Before starting these events, develop a general plan for moving from talk to action, including a timeline
Benchmarks

- President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll
- Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement: 2020
- Local purchasing
- Local hiring
- Total economic impact
- Students enrolled and graduated from low-opportunity communities